

RIVISTA MILITARE

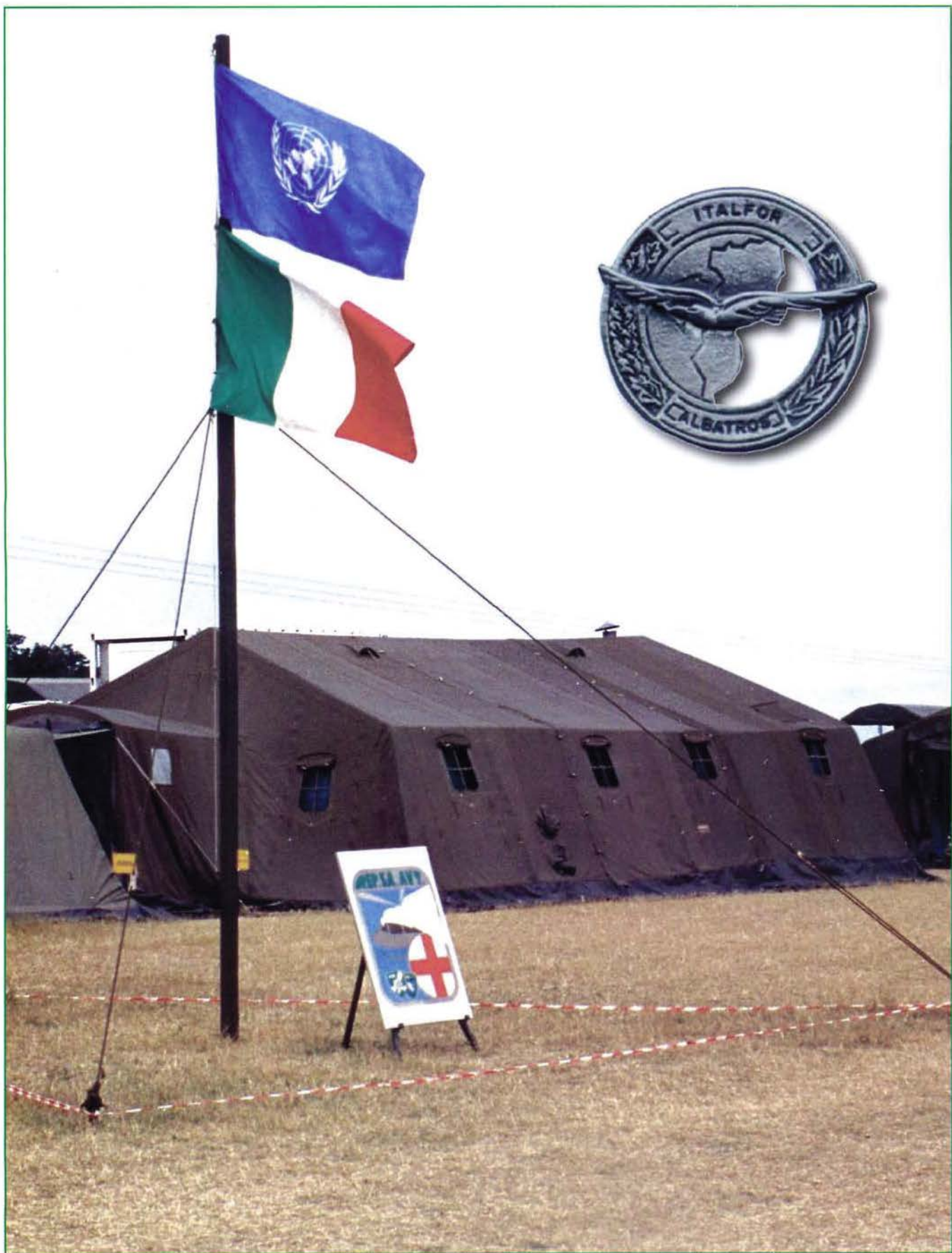
www.esercito.difesa.it

Periodico dell'Esercito fondato nel 1856



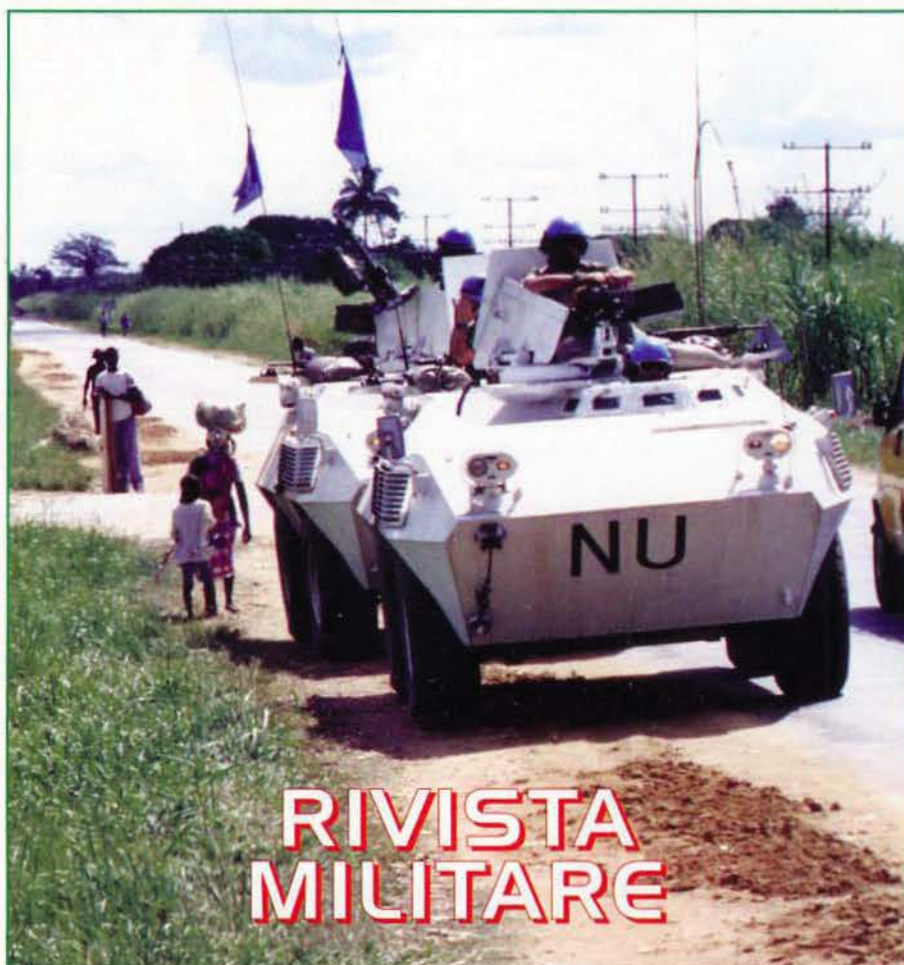
MOZAMBIQUE 1993-94

Numero Speciale - Anno 2013



Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	2
<i>Lt.Gen. Claudio Graziano</i> <i>Chief of the General Staff</i>	
<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Col. Felice De Leo</i> <i>Director, Rivista Militare</i>	
<i>Peacebuilders</i>	4
<i>Francesca Cannataro</i> <i>Valentina Cosco</i>	
<i>Press Releases</i>	8
<i>My Guys of 'Albatros'</i>	10
<i>Lt.Gen. Claudio Graziano</i>	
<i>First Time Abroad</i>	14
<i>Gian Franco Bianco</i>	
<i>The 'Susa' Battalion</i> <i>in Mozambique</i>	16
<i>Brig. Michele Risi</i>	
<i>A Captain's Memories</i>	20
<i>Col. Andrea Piovera</i>	
<i>Mozambique Stays</i> <i>in the Heart</i>	26
<i>Francesca Cannataro</i> <i>Valentina Cosco</i>	
<i>The Peacekeeping</i> <i>Mission in Mozambique</i>	28
<i>Aldo Ajello</i>	
<i>1993-2013:</i> <i>The Flight of the Albatros,</i> <i>20 Years Later</i>	36
<i>Francesca Cannataro</i> <i>Valentina Cosco</i>	



Editor in Chief:

Col. Felice De Leo

Editor:

Lt.Col. Stefano Massaro

Graphics:

OR-9 Antonio Dosa
Ubaldo Russo

English Version:

Paolo Cappelli

Printed by:

EDISTAMPA SUD SRL
81010 Dragoni (Caserta)
Phone 0039 (0823) 866710
www.edistampa.com

Authorized by the Court of Rome
under No. 994 of the Registry by
Decree 7-6-1949.

© 2014

Copyright by Rivista Militare



Vittoria
Assicurazioni

FOREWORD

Twenty years have passed since the Italian Army regained the international stage, having performed admirably abroad. Back in 1993, it deployed a regimental task force as part of the multinational military contingent.

A conscripts-based contingent taken from the 'Taurinense' Mountain Troops Brigade and the 'Susa' Alpini Regiment was sent on a peacekeeping mission to Mozambique. All these mountain men were proud to wear the UN blue cap.

I am honoured of what "those guys with the feather" boldly did during that mission under UN-aegis. And since I had the privilege to deploy on the same mission myself, I am delighted to share the initiative the "Rivista Militare" promoted to celebrate the anniversary through this special issue under the title "Mozambique 1993-1994". This means recalling a special moment in history and focussing on the role our Alpini have had as they engaged in a peacekeeping operation in that distant Country.

The articles are written by the real protagonists on the field – i.e., diplomats, missionaries, journalists, and soldiers – and will guide us through the events. It is a leap backward in one of the first missions the Italian Army took part to. But it is also a focus on our time, as the 86th National Alpini Convention celebrated the anniversary in Piacenza on March 10th through 12th.

These pages recognise how and how much our Alpini's credibility became internationally renown as they pursued peace in an area plagued by years of war.

The media of the time recorded, and reported that the efficiency of our units was very high. That mission has given greater momentum to all the changes in the Army that followed. It has stimulated even further a new national sensitivity towards greater responsibilities in the international arena.

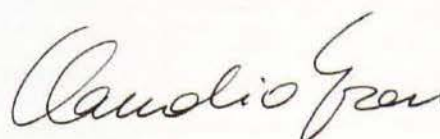
It was the prelude to a stronger integration of the Army with its allied counterparts during the international commitments that followed. As a result, the Army has acquired a significant expeditionary capability today, even thousands of miles away from its homeland.

The many commendations received from friendly and allied Countries and the gratitude expressed by the local communities our military has interacted with speak of sensitivity, humanity and respect. They confirmed how much successful and appreciated were the approach and the behaviour; in fact a model that would be known in the following international activities as "the Italian way".

This is a sign that the Italian Flag – which landed abroad during the several Army missions undertaken in geographically and culturally distant locations – has become a symbol of human solidarity and hope for many populations and has won their hearts and minds. After more than two centuries, it is still a symbol of the unity and independence of the Motherland. Since it was established in Reggio Emilia on January 7th, 1797, the National Flag has always been a key point of reference for our Army and for the Nation as a whole.

At the end of this brief foreword, let me devote my heartfelt thoughts to all those who have served and fought under the National Flag wearing the uniform of the Italian Army, and sacrificed their own lives to restore human dignity in populations devastated by wars, oppression and injustice. They deserve the eternal gratitude of the Army and of the whole Nation.

**Claudio Graziano, Lieutenant General
Chief of the General Staff**





Twenty years have passed since our troops landed overseas to join one of the most significant operations abroad. They earned the trust of those troubled populations and brought our values of human solidarity and a prospective of unity. The uniforms the readers will observe in the pictures are the result of different studies on camouflage. Over the years, however, the spirit of Italian soldiers has not changed: it is still inspired by the highest ideals and is willing to help those populations that strive for unity, peace, and civil coexistence while respecting human rights.

Winning the hearts of those people plagued by years of civil wars, famine and drought was not an easy task. Our 'black feathers'⁽¹⁾ have been called to support the difficult peace process in the first place. The military component, of which the ITALFOR-Albatros was part to, had to monitor the ceasefire, the redeployment of foreign military forces outside the borders, the demobilisation of illegal armed groups, and secure the activities undertaken by the United Nations, especially free movements between the sea and the country.

For nearly two years, our men - in fact conscripts - have performed admirably as requested. They have shown very strong cohesion thanks to the ability of the commanders of the time, who managed to inspire them, and convey the spirit of sacrifice as required by the situation.

With the free elections held in late October 1994, the commitment based on the UN mandate came to an end, and our soldiers returned home. They knew they had fulfilled the expectations.

In the following pages, the readers will have an opportunity to live those moments again in the words of the real protagonists of that peace mission, feel the same emotions they felt, and share the hopes and fears typical of any military operation.

**Felice De Leo, Colonel
Director, Rivista Militare**



(1) Mountain troops, formerly known as Alpini, wear a hat with a black feather. For Senior and Flag officers, the feather is white.

PEACEBUILDERS

Figures, stories and emotions in the history
of the 'Albatros' contingent

ONUMOZ. A shining example for the entire Italian Army; a mission that has contributed to bring peace to a land torn by years of fratricidal and bloody wars, famine, and drought.



The world of 'Albatros' is the corridor of Beira, in fact a two hundred by three kilometres strip, a piece of land the Italian soldiers have guarded for twenty-one months. Mozambique is a former Portuguese colony, a land plagued by a bloody civil war, fratricidal strife, famine, and drought. A land that needed practical help to cope with many emergencies. The two warring parties - FRELIMO (the Liberation Front of Mozambique) and RENAMO (the Mozambican National Resistance) - began to talk after many years under the Italian auspices, in particular the Roman Community of Saint Egidio. On October 4th, 1992, they signed a significant peace agreement in Rome with a view to cherishing a new hope for the life of that State. It was indeed a real peace treaty, which included provisions for the cessation of hostilities between the two rival groups; the surrender of all weapons to the United Nations; the demobilization of militias; the reconstruction of a unified national army; free elections, education, and recognition of political parties. Following these agreements, on October 13th, 1992, the Security Council adopted Resolution 782, which was pivotal to the deployment of the military mission. The UN, with its blue helmets, would have monitored the compliance with those 'Roman' agreements. As a result, the UN Secretary General had appointed a Special Representative for Mozambique - Mr. Aldo Ajello of Italy - and even sent some military observers to establish an immediate international presence and plan the deployment of a force suitable to serve the purposes of the Agreement and the resolution.

On December 10th, 1992, the Italian Parliament ordered the participation of Italy to the UN mission



in Mozambique based on a request by the UN Secretary General to the then Prime Minister. Six days later, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 797 to authorise the deployment of Operation 'ONUMOZ' (*the United Nations Operation in Mozambique*), whose military implementation began on December 23rd through the issue of the first fragmentary order. The UN mandate was clear and concise.

Through a set of political, military and humanitarian relief activities, 'ONUMOZ' should support the peace process and free elections.

Consequently, the military component of the mission received the following mandate:

- monitor the ceasefire, the separation and concentration of forces, their demobilisation and the collection, storage and destruction of weapons;
- monitor the complete withdrawal of foreign forces;
- authorise security arrangements for vital infrastructures and services;
- provide security for United Nations and other international organisations in support of the peace process, with special refe-

rence to the corridors between the sea and the country borders.

The days passed fast and everything was ready. In February, Italy deployed an Advanced Military Party to Mozambique to provide for the logistics of the entire contingent. After only one week, ship 'Eagle Arcade' docked at the port of Beira. The ultimate, true and deep meaning and purpose of the mission the military personnel were going to fulfil emerged as soon as the white vehicles and containers of the Italian Army disembarked. White is the colour of neutrality, hope, and light. And this is exactly what those soldiers were about to deliver to that land. On March 2nd, 1993, the Ministry of Defence formally authorised the deployment of the Italian contingent under the nickname 'Albatros'. At the end of March, the ship 'Kintampo' reached Beira with all the materials and equipment for the mission. Seven civilian aircraft established an air bridge between Italy and Mozambique to transport our soldiers and vehicles and to deliver hope to that troubled land eight thousand kilometres away. Not much later, one thousand and thirty men set foot on the ground. The signs of war were everywhere; the cities were poor and in ruins; the blue sea clashed with the red of the arid lands, due the long drought. The population - which endured stifling heat and humidity - was suffering a high rate of infant morta-





lity; despite such misery, it was raring to sprout anew. Milky white eyes stood out on the coal black faces of 'fourth world' children. Their smiles grew wider by simply looking at spinning helicopter rotors and the creaking noise of tracked vehicles that was bringing a new hope. Their curly hair was so dense and ruffled that almost seemed a second skin. Bright and colourful clothes covered their skins black as ebony, their bare feet covered in the red African dust that rose from the ground. This is the picture that our soldiers of the 'Taurinense' Mountain Brigade saw as they set foot in that Southern African country on the Indian Ocean. The Africa we knew through books had just materialised. It was now at hand, and pens and cameras could record it, together with hearts and minds. The ITALFOR-Albatros contingent had arrived to support the rebirth of Mozambique. Italy had deployed the 'Taurinense' Brigade, which the 'Julia' Brigade relieved. The regimental unit comprised

mountain troops battalions, one logistic battalion, one Army Aviation battalion and one airborne medical detachment. On April 14th, 1993, the operations in the 'Beira corridor' took off under the authority of the Force Commander. The control of the corridor between Machipanda (on the border with Zimbabwe) and Beira was assigned to the Italian contingent. In particular, ITALFOR had to secure rail transports between Beira and Machipanda through armed security detachments; monitor target areas, especially the oil pipeline pumping stations between Beira and Maforga; support the transport of food and humanitarian aid; escort convoys from other contingents during their movement within the area of responsibility of ITALFOR; transport and secure UN equipment transports even outside the Central Region; check some roads; ensure occasional presence near the gathering areas for demobilised forces; protect - should the need arise - UN personnel present in

such areas; provide armed escorts to the arms surrendered by demobilised forces during the transfer to regional collection centres; secure the collection centres located in proximity of main ONUMOZ bases; contribute to the logistical resupply of the aforementioned areas whenever this exceed the capacity of civil organizations of the United Nations; and provide health care services to the local populations. The coming and going along the corridor, along the sun-burned asphalt road, was constant, regular, and reassuring for 21 months. Patrolling that road was crucial to the life of the country: the main line of communication between Zimbabwe and the sea was served by one road, one railway line, and one pipeline. The Italian contingent soon became the military force of reference. Between October and November 1993, the 'Taurinense' Brigade handed over to the 'Julia' Brigade. Meanwhile, the life in the Country had continued, also thanks to the supervision of the Italian contin-



gent embedded in the 6,000-strong UN force. The success of a peace-keeping force is in inverse proportion to the number of shots fired; success is achieved when everyone performs its task silently and at best. The Italian and UN flags continued to fly high between the tents, which had become homes, and hospitals if needed. Inside them, the stories of saviours and saved people, of healed men, women, and children, crossed into each other. On May 1st, 1994, the



Italian Parliament decided to re-deploy part of the contingent. Since May 2nd, 1994, after the majority of units had redeployed, the 230-strong contingent based on a Field Hospital and a Support Unit redeployed to Beira under the name of 'Albatros 2'. Its task was to provide medical support to UN personnel deployed across the Central Region, and to the local populations. The climax of the mission coincided with the election days on 28-29 October 1994, that is, when the first free elections in Mozambique took place. On December 5th, 1994, the 'Albatros' contingent returned to Italy, and the operation was officially closed on December 17th. The figures and the results obtained in the 21 months of operations are still telling the success of 'ONU-MOZ'. The efforts on the ground achieved significant objectives, namely the cease-fire in the Country, where no further episodes of permanent conflict and violence were recorded; the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of more than a hundred thousand soldiers into the Mozambican society; the delivery of humanitarian assistance, thus avoiding a likely disaster; the national reintegration of the isolated areas governed by RENAMO; the return of three million displaced persons and one million refugees to their homes; the election of the President through free, democratic and unbiased elections in the Country for the first time, with a participation of almost 90% of those entitled to vote. The international debt was cancelled in 1999 and the Country's economy began to revive slowly. Actually, Operation 'Albatros' lasted until there was a train to be escorted, and food to be protected against marauders or perhaps simply hungry people. Saving and supporting a country and leading to its rebirth required a sense of humanity mixed with firm hand and operational capabilities.

In fact, the operation in Mozambique still represents a brilliant and outstanding example for the Italian Army as a whole.

Today, as ever, the soldiers of peace are something we are ready to bet on for the future.

**Francesca Cannataro
Valentina Cosco**

PRESS RELEASES

politica estera

la Repubblica
mercoledì 3 marzo 1993

BEIRA - Dopo le incertezze dei giorni scorsi, è partita l'operazione "Albatros" che prevede l'invio di truppe italiane per il mantenimento della pace in Mozambico. Due-

cento alpini della brigata Taurinense arriveranno oggi a Beira a bordo di un Boeing 747 affittato dalle Nazioni Unite, per unirsi ai 23 ufficiali furleri di alloggiamento giunti nella città portuale il 22 febbraio. Al loro arrivo gli alpini saranno accolti da autorità locali, dal capo dell'organizzazione dell'Onu in Mozambico Onumoz, l'italiano Aldo Ajello. Compito immediato dei 200 alpini

È partita l'operazione "Albatros" Oggi in Mozambico i primi 200 alpini

na. Un secondo mercantile ha lasciato La Spezia l'altro ieri e dovrebbe raggiungere Beira tra un paio di settimane. Le operazioni di scarico dell'Arcade Eagle richiederanno due o tre giorni, dopodiché i materiali saranno trasferiti nel sette accampamenti che formano le quattro aree di schieramento degli alpini lungo il corridoio di Beira.

sarà di sovrintendere allo scarico del mercantile Arcade Eagle, giunto ieri nella città portuale con a bordo parte dei materiali e dei veicoli necessari alla missione italia-

Corriere della Sera Giovedì 11 Marzo 1993

I soldati italiani sono pronti a partire. Proteggeranno il «corridoio di Beira» Gara tra gli alpini per andare in Mozambico «Per servire l'Onu prolungheremo la naja»

DAL NOSTRO INVIATO

TORINO — Da ieri la bandiera azzurra dell'Onu sventola sopra il tricolore nel cortile della caserma «Montegrappa», cuore della brigata alpina «Taurinense». E' stata issata durante la cerimonia per la partenza del contingente «Albatros» per le operazioni di pace in Mozambico, cerimonia cui hanno partecipato il ministro della Difesa, Salvo Andò, e il capo di Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, generale Canino.

Il momento più alto della cerimonia è stato il conferimento dei gradi di caporale da parte di Andò all'alpino Roberto Forneris, che ha rinunciato all'avvicinamento alla famiglia in quanto figlio di madre vedova per andare in Africa. Forneris ha 25 anni, è laurean-

do in Scienze politiche, abita a Borgo San Dalmazzo (Cuneo), dove ha sede il battaglione «Saluzzo», cui stava per essere trasferito. Poiché dovrebbe congedarsi in maggio, Forneris prolungherà anche la sua naja perché gli avvicendamenti avverranno ogni quattro mesi e la partenza è prevista intorno al 15 marzo.

Questa propensione al volontariato oltre il congedo è molto diffusa. Secondo Forneris, una dozzina di suoi compagni prolungherà la naja di qualche mese. Il ne-caporale ha aggiunto che pochissimi si sono rifiutati di partire.

Andò ha fornito anche i dati delle motivazioni. Il 55 per cento degli alpini vuole andare in Africa per solidarietà, il 35 per cento perché cerca una

nuova esperienza e il 15 per motivi vari tra cui quelli economici. Alla cerimonia hanno presenziato circa cento familiari degli alpini in partenza.

Il contingente italiano, comandato dal generale Luigi Fontana, comprende anche la Compagnia alpini paracadutisti «Monte Cervino» di Bolzano, oltre alle Compagnie 34a e 35a del «Susa», il miglior battaglione alpino in quanto continuamente addestrato in esercitazioni ai confini dell'Europa occidentale. Dispone inoltre di 20 autoblindo portatruppe Fiat-Iveco 6614 per il «Susa», di cinque elicotteri AB-205 e tre CH-47 «Chinook» e di tre aeroplani biposto a decollo cortissimo SM-1019. In totale il contingente «Albatros» è formato da 1030 persone di cui 518

del «Susa», 120 dell'«Monte Cervino», 10 dell'aviazione leggera e resto costituito dal battaglione logistico e dal reparto di sanità aviotrasportato «Taurinense» con quattro crocerossine.

Compito delle forze italiane è proteggere la ferrovia, la strada e l'oleodotto del corridoio che dal porto mozambicano di Beira porta al Zimbabwe, nonché concorrere al trasporto di viveri, aiuti umanitari e fornire assistenza sanitaria alle popolazioni. Andò ha anche rivelato che i rappresentanti di Ali Mahdi del generale Aidid hanno chiesto che sia affidato soprattutto agli italiani la ricostruzione della polizia somala (7000 gendarmi nella capitale e 13.000 nel resto del Paese).

Gianfranco Simone

LA STAMPA

Partiti da Caselle i mi

La Taurin Oggi in Moza

L'«Operazione Albatros» è partita. Un primo gruppo di circa 180 alpini della brigata Taurinense è volato ieri sera dall'aeroporto di Caselle verso il Mozambico. Atterrano stamattina a Beira, la seconda città del Paese africano martoriato dalla guerra civile. Verranno subito trasferiti nel porto dove troveranno attraccata la nave civile «Arcade eagle». Partita da La Spezia tre settimane fa, è carica di materiali e mezzi con i quali i 180 alpini dovranno allestire i campi per ospitare i 1100 «colleghi» che partiranno a metà marzo.

Il «viva» all'operazione è stato dato a poche ore dalla firma del decreto con il quale il governo ha scoperto finanziariamente i costi della partecipazione dell'Italia alla forza multinazionale per il controllo della pace in Mozambico: circa 700 miliardi.

In attesa ormai da settimane, gli alpini della caserma «Berardis» di Fivizzano, dove è di stanza il battaglione «Susa», e quelli della «Cecconi» di Rivoli del battaglione logistico, hanno perfezionato i preparativi per la partenza nel giro di poche ore. Dalle 18 in avanti, colonne di automezzi hanno lasciato l'«aliquota», come la burocrazia militare definisce il gruppo partito ieri, nel settore militare di Caselle.

A salutarli è andato il comandante della brigata, il generale Gino Fontana, che raggiungerà i



Il saluto delle «per-

suoi uomini in metà marzo. Foto: il delicato compito centrale, la più grande dell'intera sua carriera, oltre «per me», ci sono gli altri. A Caselle, a salutarli in partenza, meriggio decine abbracci, qualche «parzialmente» disciplina militare

9

MY GUYS OF 'ALBATROS'

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CLAUDIO GRAZIANO,
CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF,
RECALLS HIS PARTICIPATION AS COMMANDING OFFICER
'SUSA' BATTALION TO THE MISSION KNOWN AS 'ALBATROS'

It was almost the Christmas of 1992. The Officers of the 'Susa' Air-portable Tactical Group and I were in Heidelberg, Germany, to attend the NATO *Allied Mobile Force* (AMF) training planning meetings. The 'Susa' Battalion and the 'Cuneense' contingent were used to taking part to exercises in Norway, Turkey, and Denmark once a year. On that year, the 'Susa' was planned to deploy to Denmark. However, peremptory and unexpected orders dictated a change of plans. The Army Staff ordered our immediate redeployment to Italy. Rumors had that we were to deploy on a mission to a land far away shortly. The whereabouts being unknown, we all thought to Somalia. Upon returning to Italy, we searched for news and information about the Horn of Africa just at the airport. But it was not Somalia. Our destination was southwards, indeed much southwards. It was Mozambique where we were planned to deploy as part of the *United Nations Operation in Mozambique* (ONUMOZ).

The 'Susa' Battalion was trained to cope with particularly harsh environments, such as in Norway, where temperatures were often around -40 °C. That was not the issue, though. If you are trained for the Arctic, you can also perform well at +50 °C in Southern Africa. It was during Christmas time that pre-deployment training and planning took momentum, and many thought we had to leave soon. Vehicles had been painted in white, Army and Air Force light armoured vehicles known as '6614' reached our base in Pinerolo aboard large trailers. We conducted live training with APILAS anti-tank weapons, a piece of



equipment we had never used before.

The battalion - indeed a large one - was ready for deployment. Then the order came that participation to the mission was on a voluntary basis. Maybe we had to expect it coming.

Knowing that we had to dismember disciplined and trained units to form new ones with volunteers caused some regret, but we still gathered the personnel to talk to the conscripts and ask for volunteers. As soon as the order to break ranks was given, we realised we had enough GP then - but no one doubted it would be so. Almost unconsciously, we were witnessing and epoch-making event: our Army was *de facto* no longer based on conscripts. It was becoming the prototype of a professional army. Those conscripts were true 'pioneers' who, thanks to their voluntary

commitment to the mission in Mozambique, would have been the protagonists of a peacekeeping mission that is still considered one of the most successful. In my tenure as the then Commanding Officer of the 'Susa' battalion and now Chief of the General Staff, I hold such memories in my heart. Likewise, I feel obliged to share and commend the initiative to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that unforgettable mission within the 86th National Alpini Convention in Piacenza.

THE 'ALBATROS' MISSION

Albatros is the name the Italian armed forces assigned to ONUMOZ, a mission originated by the general Peace Agreements signed in Rome between the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambican National Resistance Movement



(RENAMO), through the mediation of the Community of Saint Egidio and the Italian Government. The purpose of the agreements was to put an end to the long and devastating civil war that plagued Mozambique after its independence from Portugal was achieved in 1975. Consistently with the agreements, the deployment of international forces as part of ONUMOZ should have followed based on a United Nations Security Council Resolution, with the mandate to ensure the ceasefire, monitor the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants and facilitate democratic elections. It was a challenging task as we were operating in a difficult environment which was absolutely new to mountain troops. Thanks to its extraordinary operational and logistic efficiency, the Italian contingent had soon become the force of reference to provide logistic and medical support to all UN forces in the region. The Alpini, Army Aviation and Signals personnel deployed on mission 'Albatros' were assigned the responsibility over central Mozambique, i.e. the area of greatest strategic importance in the Country. They had to ensure the disarmament of combatants, train the local regular armed forces, secure convoys, distribute humanitarian aid and, most importantly, control what is known as the 'Corridor of Beira'. The Corridor connects the port of Beira with Zimbabwe, through plains, mountains and the city of Chimoio, where the base camp of our contingent would have been. The corridor hosted three important services, all of which were vital to connect Zimbabwe to the sea, namely a paved road, a narrow gauge railway and an pipeline to transport oil from the port of Beira to Zimbabwe through the intermediate station in Mafora. The Italian Alpini were assigned the operational responsibility of such a 500 meters to a few kilometres wide strip of land.

Today, every commander on the field would consider these tasks normal. Back in 1993, however, except for the significant experience gained in Lebanon in 1982 and in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, we were still at the dawn of international operations. The Western armies, including Italy's, were still trained, prepared and equipped for a



Cold War scenario, i.e. a conventional conflict between forces with symmetrical characteristics and capabilities, that is to say Armies against Armies.

Once the deployment of the Italian contingent based on the 'Taurinense' Brigade within the UN Force to Mozambique had been decided, the movements of troops began in March 1993. That was indeed the hardest period in the whole mission. I will always remember spending long nights awake at the port docks, sleeping on the ground in unhealthy areas tormented by mosquitoes.

Once we landed in Beira at nine in the morning, the glare of burning light over the runway left room to

scenes of absolute poverty: overgrown slums around the city and yet the only shelter for the refugees fleeing from the war; children on the street, rough roads, palm trees, huts in ponds and swamps: and a scorching heat. However, as soon as we left the degradation of Beira, Africa appeared in all its thrilling beauty. Hills where all around, blinding lights, bright colours: hut villages embedded in luxuriant hills. As the evening came, we reached Chimoio: there was nothing there but a few tents where our base was to be built, a few kilometres away from the city. As we sat on the ground to eat from our combat rations, drums could be heard in the distance. The night came suddenly, a dark and impenetrable night. Unlike the sunsets on our Alps, dark comes quickly, almost without prior notice.

The months that followed were filled with movements and transports along the corridor to secure not only freight, but also the population. The units of the 'Susa' Battalion and the airborne Alpini Company - which reinforced the very battalion - fulfilled several tasks, among which, escorting trains by detaching security teams on board and following the train by road with motorised patrols; surveillance of possible targets, particularly the oil refinery in Beira and the pumping station in Mafora (the former was located in an unhealthy and marshy soil, while the latter among beautiful forests of eucalyptus). Humanitarian convoys protection, check-



points, mobile patrols, distribution of humanitarian aid, advanced patrols resupply via helicopter, preventative occupation of areas by air transport, and air patrols, surveillance and prevention activities added to the picture. In short, our brave mountain troops had no time to get bored.

I should not forget the logistical support units. First of all, the logistic support Battalion commanded by the then Lieutenant Colonel Porrazzo, now a three-star General, a great friend of mine since then. In my opinion, pizzas were distributed within his camp more often than in mine, but he always said the opposite was true. I have already mentioned the Army Aviation helicopter pilots: we would not have achieved the same success without them. Last, but not least, the Contingent HQ, with General Fontana and then General Mazzaroli as Commanding Officers. Colonel Baudissard of the Taurinense Brigade and Colonel Zambelli for the Julia Brigade reported to them.

From day to day, as our patrols were operating non-stop, we realized that the number of people on the street was slowly increasing and the fields were raked and cultivated again. But our success not only depended on preventing assaults to convoys, saving militiamen from being lynched or foiling a robbery. The real success was seeing the smile on the faces of ordinary people as we passed. Perhaps those people did not even know why white light armoured vehicles and soldiers with a blue helmet and a feather were around. However, they perceived that after our deployment they could definitely hope for something better. As we returned to Italy aboard a plane of the Mozambican airlines



we all had a lump in our throats. Recalling the exciting nights in the southern hemisphere, with starry nights and a sky so close you could almost touch it, made us sad. We were all aware, as I have already said on many other occasions, we were suffering from *mal d'Afrique*.

Even in that circumstance and as usual, the Alpini of the 'Taurinense' and 'Julia' Brigades who took part to 'Albatros' fulfilled their mandate in an exemplary manner. They have been faithful to the motto of glorious battalion where I served: *A Brusa suta'l Susa*. (Piedmontese for "the situation is critical, deploy the Susa"). They were able to interpret perfectly the spirit of what was born as an uncertain mission, and yet planned and carried out with meticulous expertise, with the tenacity and determination of those wonderful conscripts who, through their work, helped to restore hope for an entire nation.

THE ALPINI NEVER STOP

The Alpini who served on operation 'Albatros' witnessed the rebirth of a Country that was taking the first steps toward a life of peace and democracy before their eyes - I should say proudly before our eyes. But labelling those guys as mere witnesses is definitely an understatement. Understanding the territory and the people through daily contacts had transformed our Alpini. From simple witnesses they had become protagonists involved in the creation of hope and expectations in the population, even emotionally. The Alpini changed Mozambique and at the same time Mozambique had left something in each and every of them.

It is this 'something inside' and the typical desire of the 'black feathers' to do more than they are asked for that supported the Alpini of 'Albatros' (and other volunteers) as they returned to Mozambique on the tenth anniversary of the mission. They kick started some reconstruction projects in Lalaua, one of the provinces under Italian responsibility during the operation. As the works were finished, the Alpini donated a boarding school for girls, a nutrition and shelter centre for undernourished children, and a centre for women literacy and promotion to the Mozambican authorities. Of course, such initiatives bring prestige to the National Alpini Association and to Italy as a whole.





LET'S MEET IN PIACENZA

Today, due to a strange twist of fate and similarly to what happened twenty years ago in Africa, the Alpini of the 'Julia' Brigade are finalising their deployment to Afghanistan and relieving their colleagues of the 'Taurinense' Brigade.

The mission in Mozambique has clearly shown that Italian soldiers are better able than others to adapt effectively and timely to new tasks. They are able to interpret their role in an exemplary manner on the diverse operational scenarios where they deploy, just as they exploit the main factors of success in a peace mission synergistically, i.e., diplomatic, military, humanitarian and those related to reconstruction. 'Albatros' has brought Italy prestige and international visibility, something that could not emerge due to the strict logic imposed by the Cold War.

In conclusion, the mission has represented one of the most significant moments in my career and earned me a wealth of knowledge, which has proven essential to successfully address the following challenges. In terms of humanity,

there is no doubt that this experience has left me a legacy of strong ties with the men I shared those intense months on operation with. Those bonds cannot be broken: they were forged as we were doing something important in a country as beautiful as unfortunate.

And then *mal d'Afrique* came. It is a subtle regret that emerges as you remember those days, or talk of the time to colleagues who shared the experience with you. The large white fields, the bright light in the savannah, the shelter at the end of the patrol duty.

Those who have never seen an invasion of locusts may have a hard time understanding. The Mozambican children found them delicious. We did not, as they were everywhere. Someone put iguanas in the tents, for they eat locusts. But then the invasion of locusts passed, and the iguanas remained. They were awful, and yet nice animals. Africa! You should have visited it at least once to understand. Only then those perfumes and images will stay in your heart forever.

For these reasons, I commend the initiative to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that successful

operation during our National Convention in Piacenza, as we also remember and commemorate Lt. Fabio Montagna and Staff Sergeant Salvatore Stabili, who died on November 25th, 1993, in the sky of Mozambique. In addition to the exhibition of media, materials and photographs of the mission, I have particularly appreciated the idea of watching a block named 'Albatros' on parade on May 12th. On that occasion, the Alpini who took part in the mission will walk together with the Commanding Officers of the time. I will be there with them. It will be an immense pleasure for me to meet those 'young Alpini' I have seen growing into men. Now, twenty years later. I will meet those 'grown men', although I like to think they are and will remain forever 'my guys ... the Alpini of Albatros'.

Claudio Graziano,
Lieutenant General,
Chief of the General Staff

Article published in
"L'Alpino", no. 4/2013.

FIRST TIME ABROAD

The Army Calendar 2013 commemorated 30 years of missions of the Italian Army in the world. Mauro Galligani brings us back to the first mission abroad of the Italian Alpini (except for a small participation in the mission in Lebanon in 1982) thanks to his evocative photographs.

It was exactly twenty years ago. Mozambique was the area of operations, some eight thousand kilometres away from Italy.

In December 1992, the Italian Parliament accepted the UN invitation to send an Italian military contingent in southern Africa.

In those busy days of December, several things happened: the UN

cles, trailers, containers, and aircraft. On February 21st, 1993, an Advance Party composed of 23 Officers left Turin to scout the Beira corridor, i.e. the connecting strip in Mozambique between Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) and the sea. They were tasked with solving logistic problems, of which the first concerned finding locations for the camps.

It took several flights from the airport of Turin (Caselle) from March 2nd through 30th to deploy the personnel.

All in all, I think Mozambique deserves a few introductory words: formerly a Portuguese colony until the fall of the Salazar and Caetano

the USSR and Cuba - and RENAMO (the Mozambican National Resistance Movement) supported by the West through South Africa. Something resembling the Cold War was fought for seventeen years on the African soil as from the middle of the Seventies, a period filled with ideology. However, what is important is that the exhausted factions agreed to talk, also under the strong pressure from the Church. It took twenty-seven months of talks between the FRELIMO government and the rebels of the RENAMO to sign the Peace Agreements at the headquarters of the Community of Saint Egidio in Rome on October 4th, 1992. The agreements relied on the UN to ensure the proper implementation of the Treaty, which the UN transformed into rules of engagement for the ONUMOZ contingent, that is, for the Alpini.

The story of 'Albatros 1' is the story of the Italian Contingent: 600 days and nights. From March to October 1993, the 'Taurinense' Brigade was in charge, and later the 'Julia' Brigade until April 1994. When the majority of the contingent made of Alpini from Piedmont and Friuli went back home, some two hundred Alpini of the 'Albatros 2' medical detachment remained at the airport in Beira.

The 'Taurinense' Brigade - which had gone through years of training and operations in Norway and Turkey as part of the NATO Allied Mobile Force - served as a probe. The contingent was made of little more than a thousand men, 500 vehicles and trucks, 25 light armoured vehicles, 8 helicopters and 3 light aircraft.

The area assigned to the Alpini was in the middle of Mozambique, in fact a 300 km corridor between the Indian Ocean and the border with Zimbabwe, i.e. the former Rhodesia. The two corridors of Beira and Tete and the National Road 1 to Maputo were part of the area. As soon as the camps were set up, the 'Taurinense' Brigade started the operations to ensure freedom of movement (i.e., escorting road convoys and cargo trains); secure installations and target areas such



Security Council passed Resolution 797 authorising operation ONU-MOZ (*United Nations Operation in Mozambique*) and soon the spotlights moved from Rome or New York towards the mountains of Piedmont. There were the Alpini facing hard training in the barracks of Pinerolo, Rivoli, and Turin where hyperdrive was applied to the preparation of the materials and vehicles. All vehicles had to be painted in white and bear UN insignia. The first ship to sail from Genoa towards Beira was the 'Arcade Eagle' with its cargo of vehi-

regime, it became an independent country in 1975 together with Angola.

As in the case of the latter, independence sparked a bloody civil war that lasted for seventeen years and caused more than a million dead, a million and seven hundred thousand refugees, and four million displaced persons in the local countryside. The conflict took place in the *mato*, the savannah and the parks - e.g. Gorongosa Park - between FRELIMO (the Mozambique Liberation Front) - which was "fraternally" financed and armed by



as the local pipeline; and organise gathering areas to receive the former combatants. The 'Julia' Brigade took over the delicate tasks of collecting, transporting, and storing the weapons surrendered by demobilised factions, as well as of ensuring the first free elections. The protagonists of these stories still consider Mozambique as a unique and unrepeatable experience. What is more, in 1993-1994 Italy was also involved on operations in Somalia and Albania.

Indeed, the Army was preparing for the future. The idea was to establish quickly a core of Brigades and Regiments made of professional soldiers to deploy in response to any external request. Mozambique, however, was something original and unique. There is no other way to define the employment of mainly regionally recruited conscripts abroad. General Claudio Graziano, who is now at the top of the Italian Army, was the Commanding Officer, Susa

Battalion. In a memory book called 'Soldati Blu' (Blue Soldiers), he wrote that the operation had been 'the perfect peacekeeping operation'. Seventeen years of war had exhausted the forces of the two contenders; the population was drained; and there was that overarching and clear UN mandate. These are also the reasons for success. The Alpini have happily realised that Italy's security could be obtained even thousands of miles away.

There has been no other 'Albatros' contingent. Conscript is suspended and there are no more conscripts to deploy overseas.

Today, those who were deployed in mission 'Albatros' are husbands and fathers. They are fully integrated into the Italian society, but maintain strong bonds made of memories, even nostalgic ones. During the National Alpini Convention in Piacenza, there will be time to remember the twenty years since that deployment to Mozambique.

Gian Franco Bianco



Article published in
"L'Alpino", no. 3/2013.

THE 'SUSA' BATTALION IN MOZAMBIQUE

It was about eight in the morning on May 11th, 2013. I was walking towards the group of veterans of 'Operation Albatros', just before they marched on parade during the National Alpini Convention in Piacenza. There was no way I would have missed the appointment that year. It was twenty years since me and the company under my command deployed to Mozambique as part of the 'Susa' Battalion. The idea that I could meet again the people I had not heard from for a long time prevailed over any commitment.

As I walked through the group, many of those wearing the Alpini hat were hailing me. Several times I heard the refrain "Look! Isn't that Captain Risi?" One of them in particular approached me with his open arms and shouted "Captain! Captain!" His hug soon became tighter and tighter.

"I have been looking for you for twenty years! Where have you been?", he added. I was puzzled and somewhat embarrassed. The big man was crushing a Colonel of the mountain troops, asking something I could hardly decipher, as I struggled to figure out who the hell the 'crusher' was. As soon as he let me go, I saw joyful eyes full of tears staring at me. *"Don't you remember me?"* he added. *"I'm Marco Cerrato! I've been your transit specialist for ten months, of which four in Chimoio, Mozambique."* Honestly - and with much embarrassment - I could hardly establish a link between that face and practical situations. Only after we exchanged more details and unfolded stories I was flooded with memories and the related emotion, something I thought I had forgotten.

That fleeting encounter, which brought me back to a past whose scope only today I understand, was followed by intense moments during and after the parade; it also served as the basis for many reflections, which inspired this article as well.

Marco Cerrato had been my right hand for ten months between 1992 and 1993. By that time we lived in symbiosis. I was in charge of planning the redeployment of the HQ Company of the 'Susa' Battalion from Pinerolo, Italy, to Chimoio, Mozambique. He checked the expiration of the worthiness certificates of all vehicles. I prepared movement plans and he organised the convoys. I organised the Driving Courses as instructed by a very zealous Battalion HQ and he assigned the attendees. Today I understand that his fortune, and

mine, resulted from his generosity and active dedication. It took him very little time to win the trust of his colleagues and superiors in the HQ Company. Marco was bursting with energy, an all-smile, cheerful person with extraordinary memory. He knew all the plate numbers of medium and light trucks in the company by heart, together with the full names of the respective drivers. Computers were still in the Stone Age, but if I had to develop a fleet management application for a company, I would still stick to what Corporal



Marco Cerrato could do alone. Marco, however, did so well because he knew his fellow drivers one by one. For each and every of them, he knew the place of birth, the type of military driving license and, of course, their recruitment echelon. He had coffee with them; he did shooting training with them. They attended physical training together all mornings and evenings, and shared cigarettes under the Mozambican sky. No software would do what he did. This heritage would be lost. These considerations of mine should not lead to any conclusion. They are just thoughts.

In Piacenza, Marco introduced me to other guys (we are all in our 40s today, so I should perhaps say men) with whom I shared memories which resisted during the last 20 years.

One of the most powerful memories was - of course - pre-departure tenseness. Frenziness in those



months was second only to the speed with which mission conditions changed. Even the area of operations had changed in the first few months. In fact, Somalia had been the first choice for deployment. The more detailed information we received about Mozambique, the Beira corridor and Chimoio, the more the equipment, weapons and vehicles changed. And before January 1992, those names were unknown to all of us.

At first, uncertainty arose about the possibility of voluntary participation, which was more than a pain in the neck for me. In fact, a lot of shades existed between 'You're in the Army, you deploy on operation' versus 'You can volunteer to go on operation or not'. One could be at one end or the other, depending on the level of responsibility. And voluntary participation was perhaps the idea shared at the political level. The closer to the tactical level, the more we interpreted the issue in a compelling manner with a view to preserving unit cohesion. I remember the staff met around Christmas: at that time, Company Commanders were told each conscript could choose to volunteer for the mission or not based on personal considerations. However, during the informal meeting that followed, our Commanding Officer delivered a very subtle message: our leadership would be judged by the level of voluntary participation of personnel under our command. I slept very little that night.

Today I can say that was a powerful lesson. Paradoxically, 15 years

later I faced a similar situation as I was in command of a regiment. In 2008, the 2nd Alpini Regiment was enjoying post-operation recovery from a devastating tour in Afghanistan. Six soldiers had died in three terrible attacks. The unit's morale was down the drain and I had the same feeling of fifteen years earlier: were we about to deploy a haphazard collection of poorly blended and less coherent personnel?

At that time, the scary part was the lack of information on the actual situation of local security - which spanned from proper guerrilla to humanitarian intervention. No one in the 'Susa' Battalion had ever been engaged in a real operation before. Of course, we had gained great experience thanks to the excellent military training as part of the NATO Allied Mobile Force. However, no one could really say what a real military operation meant. Uncertainty turned into extraordinary motivation thanks to the cadres of the 'Susa' Battalion, and we all approached the new adventure with unique enthusiasm and courage. I realized later how important the good understanding had been, and the need to tackle the issue with the people with whom we had a good time and shared training and climbing activities. I must be grateful to the NCOs of the HQ Company who established a unique environment. Warrant Officer Lorenzo Magliocca was born in the region of Campania but had been living in Villar Perosa (Turin) for years. A resourceful and cheerful person, he ex-





exploited the friendly relationships he had within the regiment - especially with the cobbler - to invent new jungle-suited prototypes of boots, or to modify the tents to make them suitable to the new climate. He knew how to reach consensus, and the soldiers struggled to work with him; Warrant Officer Sandro Zucca, the extremely protective chief of the mechanical workshop who asked so much from his men, without making them sad or fatigued. In Mozambique, he would have worked day and night to achieve always almost 90% of vehicle efficiency; the young Sergeants, with Sergeant Paolo Bon from Friuli as a case in point, were a true example. They knew they were the closest link to conscripts and had to combine expertise, enthusiasm, and energy. In a nutshell, during the several gatherings to count the heads, the call to the conscripts ended in a series of yeas or "*I want to join!*" also thanks to the people I recalled.

The daily life on operations was

another pain in the neck that turned into a beautiful memory, also thanks to the memories shared with the personnel of the company. During training, we focus on special events, such as defending from enemy fire while executing reconnaissance patrols and escorting convoys. However, we were hardly prepared to face everyday routine. On operations, routine represents the main danger in Afghanistan or Lebanon today as much as yesterday. Defending the base camp, responding to alerts, doing continuous fieldworks to improve security, or rehabilitating unhealthy areas to enlarge the camp became daily tasks for the HQ Company, thus making a daily routine made of logistic commitments less repetitive. We all knew this would lead to lower moral standards and discipline within the unit. We did a lot of sport. I must confess I have always been mad about sports and a strong supporter of the morning run: always and all together. It took all the diplomatic skills of the

Battalion Commanding Officer to quell the large degree of perplexity about the effectiveness of this training. Eventually, all perplexities vanished when the CO joined us. And I clearly remember the veiled hint about preventing that running may become a breakneck speed race.

I succeeded, however, in using sports as an instrument of cohesion - which I continued to do in the following years. Undoubtedly, tug-of-war training has been the most enjoyable experience. Since a friend in need is a friend indeed, I capitalised on the friendship with an Official of the World Food Program, yet a former Petty Officer of the British SAS. He came to thank me for some Lariam capsules I had found for him, which would have saved the life of one of its operators. In front of a beer, I confessed I knew nothing about training a tug-of-war team. I recalled that British platoons were unbeatable during the AMF exercises. I plucked up my courage and asked for advice. He opened his eyes wi-



de and provided some preliminary information. Practice was the next step. Training consisted in towing a truck on the sand. The towing technique consisted in applying a single force, taking the initiative over the opponent and, above all, pulling the rope using the strongest of limbs, i.e. the legs, and resist with the weakest, i.e. the arms. And then there was the relationship with the team leader, the only person authorised to look at the opponent. The soldiers had a lot of fun and I am still convinced that they learned how to work as a team on that very occasion. I must say that this experience, of which the games represent the highest point, was part of the awareness I took from the then Battalion Commander. I still believe that sports are a fundamental factor for teams that need to be successful during crises where stress, fatigue, and even danger can put all our lives at stake.

The adjustment and transfer of responsibilities between the Zimbabwian and the UN contingents in the first phase gave room to unforgettable moments. For the 28-year officer who I was, this represented a huge enrichment of my professional background. I am referring to the security detachments for the convoys that picked up the equipment to establish refugee camps in Maputo. To go from Chimoio to Maputo the convoy had to travel for 12 days, during which personnel experienced both self-sufficiency and a close encounter with Africa.

On two occasions in August and September 1993, two genuinely multinational Task Forces have carried tents, blankets, cooking utensils and medical supplies to support the demobilisation of RENAMO and FRELIMO soldiers. Thirty Italian Alpini, 40 Uruguayan soldiers, and about 20 Indians drove for 2,500 km through the savannah and the tropical forest, and lived a common experience that marked, I believe, all our lives. The very same experience put our certainties and perspectives to the test, which we compared with those of the Uruguayan and Indian soldiers, and the Mozambican population who we have met along the "high road." However, we have become aware that we were doing something extraordinary thanks to a journalist with

whom we shared that wonderful experience. I am referring to Gianfranco Bianco, who kept a diary with observations and considerations, which would otherwise be lost. Gianfranco, unlike most of the journalists who I met later on operations, had not come to Mozambique to prove a point. He could have written about the effectiveness of UN operations, the ability of the Italian Army, or the soundness of the peace agreement we were protecting. Rather, he wanted to tell individual stories, and how these stories changed us, thus expanding our sense of citizenship as we returned home. He was the one who made us appreciate breath-taking scenery: the

clashed with the unbridled consumerism that produced thousands of begging children on the streets or the markets where hi-fi equipment and t-shirts made in Thailand were sold side by side with monkey paws or lizard tails. If I were to take stock of those seven and a half months, I would say they have been beautiful and significant. I am still very attached to those colleagues with whom I shared time and experience. We all agree that it was probably the most intense and richest experience, especially for the new events. Upon returning to Italy, it took me some months to appreciate again my role as Company commander. I wished I could go back to Africa. I felt like I was mo-



Rio Save, the white beaches of Xai-Xai, Vilanculos. And thanks to his knowledge and understanding of the Latin-American culture he opened us the windows onto the Uruguayan platoon. For the first time, we had a glimpse of a professional army, where soldiers were in their thirties and had a family waiting for their return in Montevideo or Paysandù.

Gianfranco would have spent about 14 weeks in Africa, during which he shared everything with us. Through his unique *savoir faire*, he also took us to appreciate those aspects of the mission we would otherwise have escaped. I remember he told the story of Laurencio Marquez before we entered Maputo. He referred to the decolonisation due to communism and how it

re useful there than in the barracks in Pinerolo. From that moment on, our profession would have no longer been the same. Exercises and training were not perceived as something *per se* anymore. We would always see them in the light of a possible employment abroad.

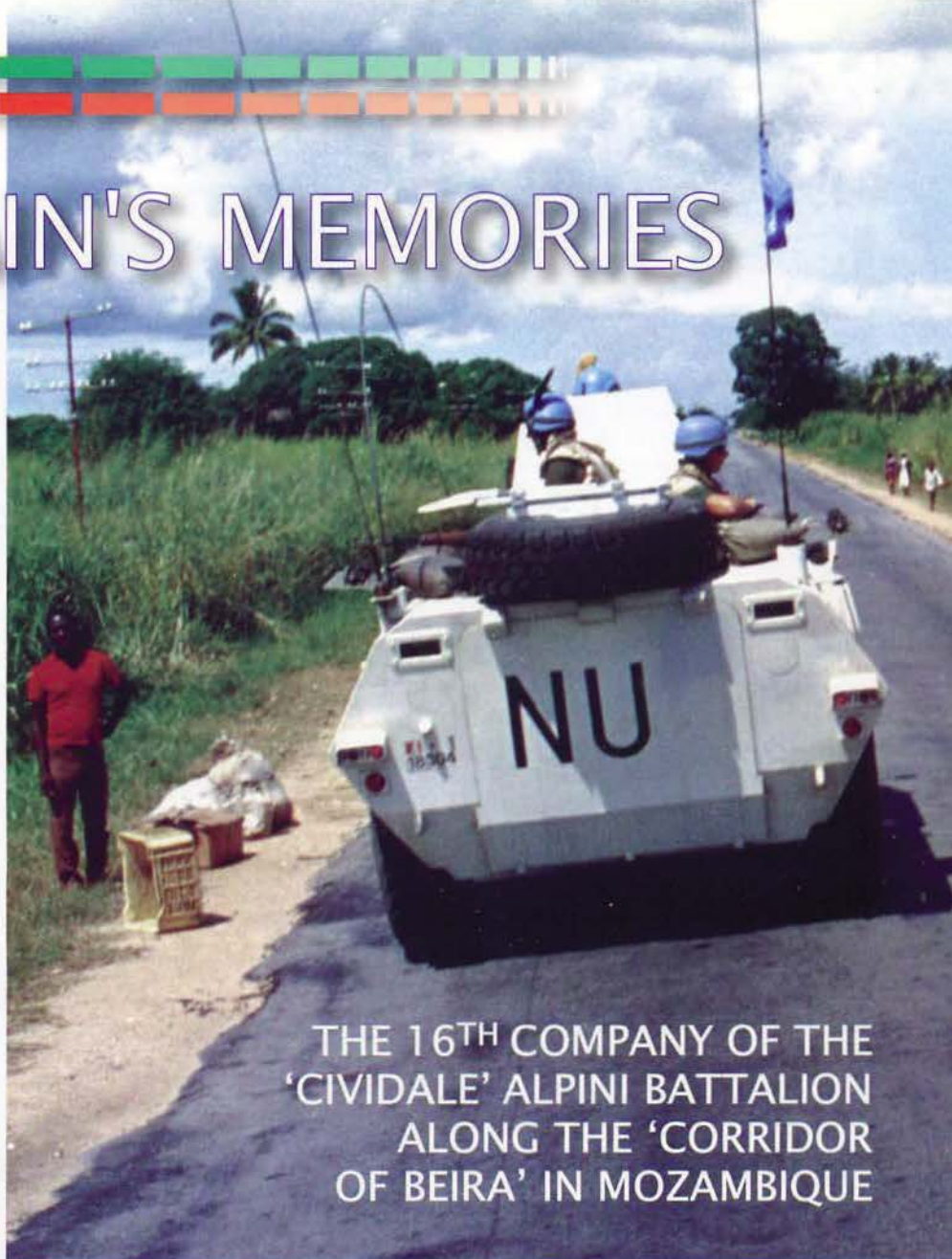
And above all, what changed was the command style. We had abandoned our role as educators of younger people who were about to take an active role in life to become more and more professional soldiers. Leaving aside the mere teacher-student relationship, we started collaborating and sharing with these soldiers, even if roles were different.

Michele Risi,
Brigadier General

A CAPTAIN'S MEMORIES

October 31st, 2013 marked the 20th anniversary since I set foot on the runway of the International Airport in Beira, Mozambique, under a bright sun. My soldiers - the Alpini - and I went down the plane stairs with our UN blue beret on. After a flight that lasted 10 hours, the 16th Company of the 'Civiale' Alpini Battalion, also known as "La Bella" (the Beautiful), was now part of the national contingent of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). It was the last of the companies of the 'Julia' Brigade to deploy to the theatre. On the following day, the Commanding Officer of the 'Susa' Alpini Battalion, Lt.Col. Macor, was to hand over command to the Commanding Officer of the 'Tolmezzo' Alpini Battalion, Lt.Col. Finocchio, at the base in Chimoio - Tobacco factory.

The company was assigned the supervision over what is known as the 'Corridor of Beira', a major 300 km line of communication that comprised one railway line, one of the few asphalted roads that crosses several rivers along rather significant bridges, and one oil pipeline. It is an umbilical cord vital for the nearby Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), which has no access to sea.



THE 16TH COMPANY OF THE 'CIVIDALE' ALPINI BATTALION ALONG THE 'CORRIDOR OF BEIRA' IN MOZAMBIQUE



Given the constructive relations between the two opposing parties, i.e. FRELIMO⁽¹⁾ and RENAMO⁽²⁾, and the overall respect of the peace agreements signed in Rome on December 16th, 1992, mines were in fact the main threat to security. The entire country was infested with mines, especially along the main lines of communication. Local problems related to the process of demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration of the fighters of both sides were also part of the picture.

After the head count and the recollection of weapons, we reached some white helicopters. Surprisingly, those Soviet Mi-8 helicopters had been painted in white with a flat brush, and tufts and deep marks were still visible on the thick layer of paint as a sign of an unclean brush (which of course was a big



brush but not a brush of great value⁽³⁾). The pilots showed up in sandals, shorts, and a large, brightly-coloured shirt while holding a bottle of vodka. Once inside the cabin, they locked the door. Twenty years later, I had a *dejà-vu* when I observed almost the same scene in Afghanistan recently. Luckily on that occasion, there were only supplies on board. Despite the not very reassuring conditions, the flight was quite calm and gave us the opportunity to get a first impression of the area of operations. We landed in Chimoio, where the HQ, 15th Alpini Regiment and the support units were stationed. It was late at night when we reached the camp of the Battalion HQ - i.e. the operational unit of the Italian contingent - after a short transfer by road. Upon arrival, the Commanding Officer of the 'Susa' battalion

briefed us. I could't sleep that night: on the one hand, everything was new. On the other, the electric generator 30 feet away from my tent was producing a strident, mechanical, and clattering noise. As the days passed, however, it became an endurable background noise, perhaps due the fact that I was ready to drop at night. The next day was dedicated to the transfer of authority between the two battalions, and of course between my company and that of the 'Susa' Battalion - perhaps the 34th - of which one team remained on the field for a short time to guide us across the area, the routes and the procedures so that we could get into the flow of operations along the "Beira Corridor" seamlessly. Another reinforcement platoon was provided by the Airborne Alpini Company of the 4th Mountain Tro-

ops Corps in Bolzano. Patrolling of the road between the city of Mutare, Zimbabwe, and the Mozambican port of Beira; escorting trains along the same route; and the surveillance of the valves of the pipeline that provides energy supply to Zimbabwe were among the most common activities.

Escorting trains was a fairly adventurous activity. The platoon assigned to the mission often travelled to Beira the day before and slept at the detachment where the company in charge of guarding the pipeline terminal - i.e. the 6th Company of the 'Tolmezzo' Battalion - was stationed. Once at the train station and after proper details had been arranged with the railway operators, one close protection team travelled aboard the train, while the rest of the platoon followed on wheeled vehicles along the 'corridor' and reached the several stations and level crossings along the line ahead of the train. Changes in schedules were normal, and sometimes the train stopped in a village in the middle of nowhere for the night. While the driver could find hospitality in a friendly hut, our soldiers remained aboard to watch over the train and its cargo. On other occasions, we couldn't grasp the logic behind the stops plan.

Guarding the valves of the pipeline was not a very exciting task, apart from the risks posed by mines, but gave us a sense of how significant the 'Corridor or Beira' we were guarding was. In fact, until an agreement was reached that ended the long civil war and opened the door to the deployment of UN peacekeepers, the 'Corridor' had been guarded by the Army of Zimbabwe. The defensive positions dug in the vicinity of the large access hatches to the valves regulating the flow of oil were a clear evidence of that, together with the presence of machine-gun belts and bullet casings.

Routine tasks alternated with camp guard shifts; shooting practice; episodic patrolling along secondary routes; air reconnaissance aboard the 'SIAI 1019' Army Aviation aircraft; and the rehearsals of the several contingency plans - which often required using helicopters to respond to unexpected contingencies as well as to more predictable emergencies. The latter

included a stronger control along the route between Chimoio and the border with Zimbabwe in Manica in case the domestic situation in Mozambique degenerated beyond control.

Life in the camp, apart from the quarterly or half-yearly tour of duty, was not very different from the one we trained for during the summer excursions, or the autumn and winter routine activities in Italy. Also the organisation of the Company HQ was the same as in any outdoor training activity. We lived

radio station, which required our relatives to learn the fundamentals of radio communications, such as using "Over" to tell the radio operators to switch the signal between the radio and the land line. Thanks to AM radios, our company could exchange a few words with our Regiment located in Chiusaforte, especially in the evenings, and make us feel less distant. During the rainy season, we learned that the water draining culverts we were used to digging around tents on our mountains were perfectly use-

an attraction. Field mice - which were housed at the rocky hill on the south side of the camp - were regular visitors. We also met large blue-hipped lizards, and a python that used to resting within the barbed wire hollows to avoid the attentions of the curious Alpini. In addition to the regular guests, we had seasonal visitors, among which swarms of termites and of small black stink bugs, indeed very similar to their Italian relatives, including for the nauseating smell; let alone quite aggressive spiders



in modular tents equipped with camp beds. The mosquito protection screen was a must, and heating - indeed a welcomed feature on the Alps - was of course not necessary. Field kitchens provided for victualing and practical disposable trays replaced the metal tins. The available equipment was of little comfort: just a field shower equipped with a diesel burner to produce hot water, hemp roof and wood flooring, chemical toilets, a volleyball court, and a few home-made gym equipment. We could call home once a week for a few minutes. Sometimes calls were routed through the "RH600" AM

less: we needed an excavator to do the job. In order to drain the huge amount of water the African sky could pour very quickly on a small area we had to widen the culverts and transform them into gutters and build overpasses. Sometimes, showers hit patrols and made them wet as a drowned rat, while other patrols a few hundred yards away could be completely dry. The touch of Africa was evident on some occasions. Whenever the population of the nearby village celebrated an event the rhythm of music reached our camp and lasted for hours. Moreover, encounters with the local fauna were almost

and, occasionally, snakes. Of note, the locals considered the termites a delicious snack, just as fried mice. As per the snakes, meeting a puff adder was one of the most interesting experiences. We captured one specimen near the guard post in the very centre of the camp. Just as interesting was the mamba, a quite aggressive snake the patrols have sometimes found along roads.

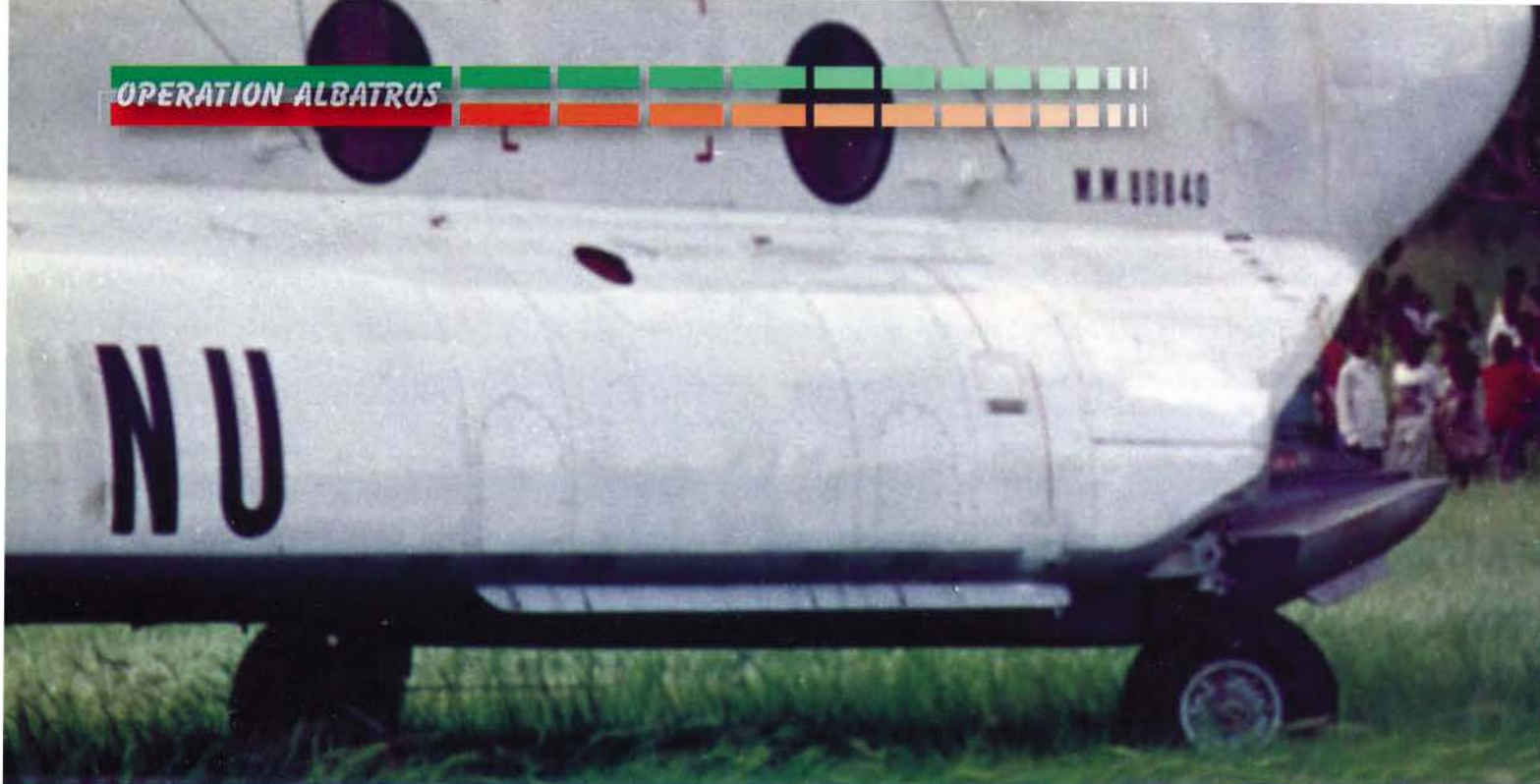
Long range patrolling down the south, i.e. down to the border of the area of responsibility where a modern bridge along National Road 1 crossed the Rio Save, was less common. Such activities lasted at

least 48 hours. It took more than 6 hours to almost two dozen vehicles to drive along more than 300 km of what was - in theory - a paved road. In practical terms, at least twenty years of no maintenance and persistent mine obstacles had the road riddled with holes. As the HQ Platoon and a close security team set up the base camp in Nova Golega as only mountain troops can do, tactical teams reached the bridge over the Rio Save. Sometimes they continued to the west of Nova Golega to link with a UN de-



tachment consisting of half a dozen observers who were setting up a demobilisation camp for the FRELIMO Fighters near Chibabava. We were generally back to base late at night. We usually slept in two-man tents after a huge meal based on pineapple, which the commanding officer obtained by local children in exchange of canned tuna and meat. The next day, after dismantling the base and cleaning up the area, we travelled back to Chimoio, where we usually arrived late in the afternoon. The early GPS navigators had proved very useful in all these activities: the available maps were often for





air navigation, or the scale was too large, thus being absolutely unsuitable for driving. While quite bulky for the today's standards, we used the digits on the display as geographic coordinates in order to find the exact station point on the air navigation maps available. And there was no Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) projected coordinates or kilometric grids. At all! I remember the exchange of new way points or the update of the existing ones among patrol commanders as one of the activities that kindled the most interest.

As soon as the end of mission approached, it turned out that demobilisation camps were causing troubles. In fact, in addition to being located in places difficult to reach by ground, they suffered from obvious organisational difficulties due to both the vast territory and - above all - a new-born State. In exchange for their demobilisation, i.e. the surrendering of weapons and of the scarce military equipment they had, the ex-combatants should receive back pay, a small discharge allowance, and a 'farmer kit' consisting of some farming tools, blankets, and seeds. Unfortunately, the government-sponsored camps for the demobilisation of FRELIMO fighters suffered delays caused by the poor organisation of the State. The situation caused frustration and anxiety which, in some cases, resulted in riots and violence against UN camp managers. For those of RENAMO, the problem was in the unrealistic promises made by the

Commanders to their men to maintain control as the funds from foreign donors were over and living at the expense of the population was no longer possible. Once the UN unveiled the lies, there have been cases in which frustration ended in riots and in the kidnapping of UN staff, as in the camp near the Serra de Gorongosa, about 100 km north of the Corridor. Because of this incident, added to many other situations, I was required to do several hours of air observation aboard a "1019" aircraft and report any development on the ground via radio. Indeed, a real fun as I suffer from airsickness!

Sometimes we had to bring help to the wounded after serious road accidents. I still remember when a huge truck transporting many passengers in rear dump body rolled over near Chibabava. On other occasions, we had to clear parts of the road where mines had been reported, especially after accidents had occurred. Among landmines, the most dangerous were those of Soviet production with wood casing: of course, because they could not be detected by metal detectors. As time passed, the pressure plate degraded and much less pressure was required to set off the mine. Although originally about 200 kg were required, a degraded mine could explode even if a person stepped on it, with the consequences we can all fathom. Even then, the role of engineers, and on particular of EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) teams, was absolutely irreplaceable.

My memories are those of a Captain, thus essentially related to operations and to the daily life in Company. Back then, I had little time - and luckily, I might add - to reflect on the more doctrinal, and political and military aspects of the mission. The peace agreements signed in Rome in 1992 and UNSCR 797 were light years away from the daily operations in a Company, a twilight zone for a distant and blurred horizon. Every day, the problems we faced concerned the assigned tasks and services, notably the maintenance of weapons, equipment and, most importantly, radios to keep the personnel safe; preserve training levels for those not engaged in operational activities; preserve the condition of ammunition stocks; and implement all possible improvements to the living standards of the Alpini under my command. In fact, I have found similar conditions again only 20 years later in Bala Morghab, Afghanistan. As Company Commanders, we were required a very high level of care and attention. That was a specific requirement from Battalion Commanders so that we had to achieve optimal operational standards and ensure our personnel was completely safe. Do not forget we were commanding conscripts who had been enlisted only for a few months and yet volunteered for the mission. Those in my company, for example, had been recruited in May.

Garrison training had already been very challenging. The 2nd training cycle had just finished in



August with the typical 'evaluation drill.' This platoon-training event included a 48-hour exercise, in fact a final exam for the enlisted personnel and their platoon leaders, who were often Special Entry Officers at the very beginning of their career. Theatre-focused training required two months and included left-hand driving (traffic rules in Mozambique are the same as in Great Britain); motorised patrol training; driving courses for the armoured vehicles borrowed from the Air Force; rifle teams training, as such teams were used to driving light trucks rather than armoured vehicles. Also, Portuguese language courses were delivered, together with culture-specific courses. Mine awareness, advanced use of weapons from aboard vehicles, and a particularly complex and comprehensive vaccination schedule against malaria completed the picture.

As we prepared for departure, many among us were almost relieved such a demanding training was over. However, I perceived some anxiety for the completely new situation we were about to face.

The Cold War had just ended and the cessation of hostilities between FRELIMO and RENAMO was one of its first and most striking effects on the African continent. Further north, our fellow paratroopers, tankmen and cavalymen were facing a very tense situation in Somalia along the Imperial road - which links Mogadishu to Ethiopia, i.e. another landlocked coun-

try. The news about the gunfights and our dead colleagues did not contribute to raising the morale.

Only a few years before, as a Lieutenant, I was patrolling the border with the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in full gear. The training rehearsals included staff and live exercises to simulate possible invasion scenarios. We have been educated and trained to face a conventional attack from the East and now, after only two months of mission-specific training, we had been thrown into peace keeping with a blue beret on and the vehicles painted in a white livery with UN markings. But the country, climate, terrain, population, and threat were totally unconventional. In retrospect, there were reasons to be worried, indeed.

What took us out of trouble, in my opinion, was the fact that the peace agreements signed by the two warring parties seemed to hold. Moreover, well-established procedures and standardised logistics down to the lower levels, the habit of acting in an independent and yet standardised manner on the mountains - where improvisation does not bring rewards but often a punishment - also contributed. In addition, being used to keeping constant radio links during everyday activities represented an absolutely rewarding and key factor for success along with the SRT 178 AM radio station that equipped companies. A delayed reply to a call from the radio network coordinator would almost certainly earn a verbal warning upon returning

to base, if not an immediate one via radio.

Even 20 years later, I can say that mission was epoch-making, not to mention the feelings, memories and adventurous flavours such an experience leaves in 20-or 30-year olds. The Armed Forces regained their function as an instrument available to decision-makers, just as Von Clausewitz thought, even if they never lost it. In doing so, they took the distance from the threatening and still limited horizon of the Iron Curtain. Irrespective of the political or military will, the international balance was changing and so did the expectations of the States and the international community towards the Armed Forces, especially those of the richest countries.

Andrea Piovera,
Colonel Alpini Corps

REMARKS

(1) *Frente de Libertação do Mozambique*, a movement inspired to Marxism that had fought for independence from Portugal.

(2) *Resistencia Nacional do Mozambique*. Supported mainly by Rhodesia and South Africa, FRELIMO was perceived as the natural landing shore for clandestine anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements.

(3) Reference is cultural-specific. A commercial about brushes has been aired for years in Italy and this sentence was the bottom line of the advertising message (TN).

MOZAMBIQUE STAYS IN THE HEART

THE ALPINI OF ONUMOSZ MEET ON THE INTERNET

Posts, photos, captions, and vignettes deliver a stream of memories. The Internet wins over time and space. It is the new 'home' to those who lived a memorable experience twenty years ago.

Africa and Mozambique stay in the heart. Indelible marks have been stronger than time.

"After Mozambique, nothing will be as it was before." We heard someone saying this at the end of the mission, and nothing can be more true.

Even today, the words and deeds of the same black feathers who took part in ONUMOSZ as young soldiers confirm that the experience they lived has been crucial to the life of each and every one of them.

It is 2013 and twenty years have passed since the beginning of an exciting adventure in Africa for the Italian military.

Communications in 1993 were delivered through radio links or by the words whispered in what today seem rudimentary telephone booths; through handwritten letters; or by messages written with the reliable Olivetti typing machines. Somehow, we can still hear the ticking of metal levers on paper, as every keystroke left indelible moments and emotions on white sheets of paper that would have taken their way home.

The Internet, real-time chats, Skype calls, and social networks today are the new channels to tell stories made of smells, scents, flavours, and influences from the other side of the world. The telling continues through the voices and memories of those who lived that experience in first person.

Their faces of young soldiers are today the faces of grown men.

It is an endless multimedia beat. The Alpini who deployed on UN mission 'Albatros' - also known in Italy as ITALFOR - are still catching up to recall an experience they cannot forget, an experience they continue to share and that made them different.

Recently, we stumbled upon a web-



page on the most popular social network today. The colours in the palette are white and blue, the same as in the flag of mission 'Albatros'.

This is where the memories of the then conscripts, of the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and their leaders become strong and vivid. It is just a Facebook group, a virtual place to share memories. By reading the comments of the members, reflecting on their words, and looking at their photos we feel as we are teleported back in time and space: all we see is objects, images, memories. These are the stories of people and their experience, of the anecdotes and events they lived along the Beira corridor. It is the life in the neat mazes made of tents under the shadow of the Italian and UN colours on a flagpole.

That commitment they fulfilled willingly is part a choice made twenty years ago and never betrayed.

Today's virtual marketplace oozes with stories that are so lively, which no one could have wiped out.

The posts themselves reveal none of those soldiers has ever forgotten what happened.

One of the great advantages of social networks is that they bring people together. Thanks to words and images, those people meet and make distance irrelevant, almost non-existent. Everyone is so incredibly close through a simple click.

The faces of those 1,030 Alpini - indeed in their forties or so - still reveal the excitement of feeling "privileged" people for the many sunsets

and sunrises observed over there for months. These have been privileged people, as they could witness the Mozambican population standing on their feet and reacting to the devastation of war and to an aggressive, merciless nature.

The faces of those young guys appear on the www.alpinimozambico.it website as well as on Facebook.

Those guys, many of whom were conscripts, had just finished the secondary school. Inside them was a mix of ideals and pride for wearing a uniform, which turned into commitment from the heart in helping others. Outside them, one could observe the vigour of youth, the athletic builds as a result of months of training.

Everyone reading the stories of the 'Taurinense' and 'Julia' Brigades, of the mountain infantry and logistic battalions, of the Army Aviation Flight Group and the Airborne Medical Detachment is overwhelmed and taken to far off places. It is on the wave of those memories that we want the Albatros to fly again, also through the words of the protagonists.

Each one of the more than seven hundred members of the group, i.e. a big portion of the 1,030 participants to the mission, is reviving the memories. Some posted a picture of relaxed moments; some others wrote comments as they try to recognise familiar faces. Everyone, however, is searching. They are searching for the former colleagues and superiors they shared a memorable experience with.

They were friends, more than just mere fellow soldiers, whose lives have taken different paths. One comment stands out through the countless posts that make the strings of our souls vibrate: *"Africa, the no man's land. Wherever you are, I*

will miss you every day of my life. I listen to you, to your joyful and melodious chants, your forgotten fragrances, the scents of orange. All is far-fetched. Sometimes, I still don't believe I have been there. I miss you. And you, warm and dry sun, I will always remember how you warmed my skin beyond belief. And then the spectacular sunsets, which left me speechless. I love you, Africa."

This heartfelt and touching poem is echoed by the tale of two colleagues who have virtually engraved the memories of the departure for ONUMOZ in the digital pages.

"In 1993, soldiers were about to leave to Mozambique for a wonderful life experience that made so many of us grow up. I just want to drop a line to all those who were with me before, during, and after such a great adventure. In today's world, I think some people should see what poverty and war mean, but also the desire to start again."

"On March 2nd, 1993 and on the following days the Alpini of the Taurinense Brigade started leaving to Mozambique. I had a seat reserved on a LAM flight on March 22nd. We took off from a cold airport in Caselle, Turin, made a stop in Paris, and then flew en route to Maputo. Nineteen years have passed since then, but the thrill in seeing the snow-capped peak of Kilimanjaro from ten thousand feet is still strong. So is recalling the 118 °F heat wave that hit us at the plane door."

The memories of African nights deserve a separate mention:

"I have been at Chimoio Base from May 31st to October 11th, 1993. Your photos recall indelible nostalgic memories. During those nights on guard, my eyes were lost in a sky full of stars so close you can almost touch it."

Some others are grateful to those who created a meeting place, even a virtual one:

"This group is, for me, a jump back to a past I love to remember. I gladly see many of the Taurinense are here. I found some of the many with whom I have shared my ninety days in Africa! A strong hug to all the veterans of Operation Albatross."

Between the lines and the flow of memories, a picture shows of the convoy escort and the arrival of mail. The brief comments of the Alpini who starred as protagonists reveal a panoply of emotions reinforced by images. "Security Detachment for rail transport. Being nineteen: how cool!"; "Beira Airport. Awaiting mail." The attention to the postal service confirms the importance of maintain-

ing a link to the homeland and the beloved ones. The white letters delivered family warmth eight thousand miles away. Today, it is the Internet that allows men and women in uniform to perform their duties away from home and still have a window open on their own world. Today as before, contacts become part of the human nature and a supporting force even in the harshest conditions.

Among the many different stories and anecdotes, one photo with a brief caption seems particularly interesting: "Me in a village near Chimoio. My brother in arms and I bought the house as a present for the guy to my right, who was about to marry the girl with the red and white striped shirt; to my left, the groom's parents."

and adventure. When asked "Should you pick one memory and one only, what that experience would have been?" the answers were indeed much different: "it made me see the world with different eyes and it is not a cliché: it's true! After four months in Africa, I was a completely different person; I think I have matured all of a sudden during that experience; I have learned to appreciate those moments of the day that normally go unnoticed; This experience made me grow up and I didn't ever notice; And I literally fell in love with Africa. Not a day goes by without dedicating a thought to this wonderful continent - We were privileged. It was an experience that has enriched us all and that we will keep in our hearts in a lifetime - As the most important thing, I have learned to appreciate



Solidarity was so extraordinary that it was kept under wraps, but rewarded with the joy that comes from helping people really in need. Stepping into the reality of those distant brothers and comparing it to our own, thinking about the girlfriend at home, helped to create a strong and inseparable bond with that land.

The clear, effective, direct, and so much engaging words of General Marizza, his cartoons - indeed a mix of wistful remembrance and sarcastic irony - mirror the emotions perceived in that sun-scorched earth perfectly.

One thing is certain: no one of the 1,030 Alpini of ITALFOR Albatros has forgotten. One of them posted the following: "It's been a long time, but I will never forget the mission in Mozambique in 1993."

Mini-interviews from fellow soldier to fellow soldier are also a memorable testimony of the mission, work,

what life has given me; I was so lucky I had a strong family to support me when - on the contrary - children had to fend for themselves from the very beginning; I was really pleased to find this group on Facebook. It makes me feel really gloomy. I remember two children in particular, Pedro and Paulo."

Among the many memories and comments, a recall of the reveille and of those Sundays when a link to the homeland was sought through a feeble radio commentary of the soccer games: "Medical Detachment in Chimoio. March 24th to July 1st, 1993. HURRAY! Memories from the nights spent in communication shelters. Ready to play the reveille track on the cassette for the entire base. Oh dear, what a time!"

This is Mozambique, too. It is unchanged emotion even after twenty years.

Valentina Cosco
Francesca Cannataro

THE PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN MOZAMBIQUE

REFLECTIONS ON A SUCCESS

In October 1992, immediately after the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Government of Mozambique and the armed rebel movement known as RENAMO (the Mozambican National Resistance) I was offered to lead the peacekeeping mission in charge of implementing the Agreement by the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali. He did so as recognition of the crucial and successful role Italy had played during the peace negotiations. The Secretary General was looking for an Italian within the United Nations system and with the appropriate rank. I am Italian and was the Director, External Affairs of the United Nations Program for Development with the rank of Under-Secretary-General. Also, my family name starts with 'A', and is therefore found more easily in the staff directory. Unexpectedly, the greatest adventure of my life had begun, and I was put at the helm of ONU-MOZ.

The agreement I had been required to implement was the result of long and painstaking negotiations that lasted for two years in Rome. The Italian Government and the Community of Saint Egidio - together with a group of international observers in a supporting role - acted as negotiators. Unlike other occasions, the representatives of the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO had also discussed all the aspects of the peace agreement and looked for and proposed appropriate solutions to the several pending issues. They did not hide the thorny issues that would inevitably sting during the implementation phase and generate the consequences we can all imagine.

Clarity and comprehensiveness were two of the positive characteristics of the Agreement. But there were





more. Some other innovative aspects made it an exemplary and highly innovative document. First and foremost, it was clearly stated that the rules governing its implementation prevailed on the existing legislation – including the Constitution – and that the two Parties were in fact peer partners. The latter aspect was easy to define but very difficult to implement. During the negotiations, equality was demonstrated by the fact that neither side had been able to win the war. Following the signing of the Agreement, such equality was crushed. On one side was the Government, with the whole state structure behind it. On the other was a guerrilla movement without resources and in need of everything, from food to accommodation and clothing. More in general, they lacked the financial resources required to transform a guerrilla movement into a political party. Once the RENAMO realised its condition of inferiority, there was a real risk it would consider the agreement as an ambush and block the peace process. Anyway, it was obvious that not a single soldier would have been demobilised if the problem had not been solved.

Under the agreement, the government would have to meet the needs of RENAMO, but none of the two partners liked such a solution. The Government had difficulties in financing his opponent, and the RENAMO considered depending on the government's "charity" a form of humiliation. The international community had to act and for that to happen I had to be involved intima-

tely and directly, even if this meant being accused of bias. Luckily, the main Countries concerned, and Italy in particular, responded to my

call positively. Subsistence issues were then solved, and a 'Trust Fund' was established to support the transformation of RENAMO into a political party. Undoubtedly, that was one of the most delicate and sensitive phases of the whole process. Without such support, the peace process would have been endless. And yet the Government had perceived it as an act of bias, and the relationship between the Government and the ONUMOZ suffered from it. Despite the financial assistance provided to RENAMO by the international community was expressly sanctioned in the Agreement, the form in which it was organized and dispensed was absolutely original, indeed something the United Nations and the international community had never tried before. The work carried out in Maputo by the representatives of donor Countries to persuade the respective Capital cities to contribute to the fund was key.





lions initially under the authority of the first exploratory mission to be increased to five. Their task was to protect the five main lines of communication in the Country, which would otherwise have remained unguarded during the demobilisation process of both sides. Eventually, the United States – which had already expressed doubts for the costs to support three battalions – gave green light for five and this for two reasons, notably the failure of the mission in Angola and the change of administration in Washington. Ambassador Bolton – who held the purse strings during the Republican administration – was called to take the final decision after the victory of the Democrats and during the transition between the Bush and Clinton administrations. At the suggestion of the Secretary-General, I met Ambassador Bolton in Washington to explain the reasons behind our request. After a

Secondly, the peace agreement provided for the creation of a strong political structure with the United Nations in the driving seat. Unlike Angola and other peacekeeping missions, the United Nations were not simple observers in Mozambique, but rather the engine of the entire peace process. The main managing body was the Supervisory and Control Commission (SCC) – which I chaired – composed by the two parties and a group of international representatives from France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, United Kingdom, the United States and the Organization of African Unity. The decisions were taken by consensus by both parties, with the participation of all SCC members, including international members. The SCC was assisted by a number of Subsidiary Commissions chaired by the UN, namely the Ceasefire Commission (CFC); the Commission for the Reintegration of Demobilised Military Personnel (CORE); and the Joint Commission for the Formation of the Mozambican Defence Forces (CCFADM), and by the National Election Commission (CNE) chaired by a Mozambican authority chosen by mutual consent between Parties.

Even the military structure was particularly robust. After the failure of the mission in Angola and based on the assessment of the military attachés of the Member States of the SCC, I requested the three batta-





long talk, he smiled, agreed to provide the five battalions and added a revealing comment: *"You have been very convincing Mr. Ajello and the next Administration will pay the bill, after all."* That is what I call being in the right place at the right time. The five battalions were made available by Bangladesh, Botswana, Italy, Uruguay and Zambia. Other countries such as Argentina, Brazil, India, and Portugal contributed some support units.

The schedule of the peace agreement - in fact the weak point of the entire process - proved to be totally unrealistic from the very onset. None of the three Parties involved - the Government, the RENAMO, and the United Nations - could have met it. The Government had failed to understand the full political and logistic impact of the arrival of RENAMO in Maputo and in other provincial capitals, nor the political and logistic impact of a UN military contingent much larger than initially expected. The issue of national sovereignty was raised in the National Assembly and the negotiations about the *"Status of Forces Agreement"* went on for several months before it was approved.

RENAMO's personnel were too unprepared and limited in numbers to manage the complex system of commissions mentioned in the peace agreement. The suspension of the work of the Commissions caused by the sudden and unmotivated withdrawal of RENAMO from Maputo proved to be instrumental to the selection and preparation of the required cadres by the very RENAMO. Once again, my decision to leave RENAMO the time required to complete the preparation of its cadres and not to call for a violation of the agreement caused some frictions between me and the Government, while the latter expected me to condemn such behaviour.

Finally, the UN was not able to deploy five infantry battalions and the related administrative and logistic support within few weeks. The entire deployment took in fact about seven months to complete. It is worth noting that the first contingent to arrive in Maputo was the Italian Alpini battalion, which was immediately assigned to the protection of the corridor of Beira, i.e. the most sensitive line of communication that connects the Indian Ocean to Zimbabwe and includes a road, a railway and a pipeline. The batta-



lion - in fact the backbone of the entire military force - was known as 'Albatros' and composed by elements from the 'Taurinense' and the 'Julia' Mountain Brigades. Apart from the exceptional quality of the men involved, the battalion had air reconnaissance capabilities - and therefore could keep an eye on the entire corridor of Beira - and an excellent field hospital. The latter was instrumental in establishing a positive relationship with the Mozambicans. Once again, I decided to change the strict rules according to which the hospital could only assist the UN staff and opened it to the civilian population. I did the same for the second field hospital provided by Argentina. No other hospitals in Mozambique had the same equipment as ours and the Mozambicans took great advantage from both. Of course, this translated into a work overload for the medical staff, but even a situation beyond the rules was faced with professionalism, dedication, and enthusiasm. My main goal was to make sure the civilian population saw ONUMOZ under a friendly and positive light rather than as an occupation force, which was its initial fear. The hospitals, together with other initiatives inspired by the same principle, have helped creating a positive cli-





mate that lasted throughout the entire peace process.

Clearly, the first priority of the mission was to consolidate peace. This had two major implications: first and foremost, unlike Angola, elections would not take place if the demobilisation of RENAMO fighters had not been completed satisfactorily. Secondly, the political and economic capital of both sides would have to be lost in case they decided to return to war. Peace would have hold only if both Parties had perceived it as relevant to their interests. And even in this operation, we had to pay more attention to RENAMO - which had nothing to lose at the beginning of the peace process. Also in this case, I had to run the risk of being accused of bias. Today, it is clear that the political growth of RENAMO has been pivotal to the success of the operation, and created the conditions for the continuation of the post-election democratic process.

The strategy to consolidate peace also meant the process had to follow at its own path and pace. Dead-

lines were extended every time one or both sides were unable to keep such a pace. In this respect, the formation of RENAMO's cadres is a case in point. Conversely, when one Party used filibustering tactics deliberately, persuasion efforts were required to put an end to such behaviour and to resume the peace process. Strong pressure has been exerted on RENAMO in late 1993 as President Dhlakama had to be convinced to start the demobilisation of its troops, in fact abandoning the military option and renouncing to its negotiating power. Of course, we had to provide assurance that his vital and legitimate interests would be protected. Pressure was also used on the government as the Armed Forces resisted to finalise the demobilisation process and to create a safe environment before the elections. In both cases, ONUMOZ has experienced tensions with RENAMO at first, and with the Government later. The pressure over ONUMOZ was successful on both occasions and the process achieved the intended steps ahead. With this

in mind, support by the international community was of decisively important.

It is generally accepted that the most successful operation of the entire mission was the demobilisation of the armed forces of both parties, and the creation of a new common Army. The soldiers of governmental forces and RENAMO were gathered in various sites. More than 80,000 of them had been demobilised and reintegrated into the civil society, of which 10,000 enrolled to form up the new Army. As per the latter, 30,000 former combatants had to be selected on a voluntary basis, but no more than 10,000 could be found. Also in this case, an important and yet unconventional innovation was introduced to complete demobilisation successfully.

The agreement provided that each demobilised soldier had to be given clothing and agricultural tools, and paid six months of salary. It soon became clear that a six-month timespan would be insufficient for the reintegration of demobilised soldiers into the civilian life. Also, at



the end of the sixth month, the electoral campaign would have been at its climax, with demobilised soldiers without resources all around, and capable of using weapons. A longer timespan would have to be covered, and vocational courses provided for reintegration. Once again, I turned to the international community, which established an additional fund to cover the expenses for 18 more months of salary. This initiative was known as the 'Reintegration Support Scheme.' This very innovative and clearly untraditional fund achieved two important results. First, it pushed the former combatants themselves to give greater momentum to the demobilisation process, as they saw no point in prolonging it; secondly, the fund prevented soldiers from being kept as a reserve – as in the case of Angola – for hidden soldiers would not have been entitled to wages. In my opinion, three factors have been decisive for the success of the peacekeeping mission in Mozambique. First and foremost, the great desire of the Mozambicans for peace, to which the will to make peace of the local leadership and especially of the common people should be added. Indeed, no one can hide the fact there were forces in Mozambique willing to continue the war. Unfortunately, for some people war is a big deal. However, given their limited number, these forces were easily neutralized.

The second factor was the active role played by the international community, even beyond the provisions of the peace agreements; its unity; its

ability to speak with one voice; and the unlimited support provided to the Special Representative of the Secretary General during the whole process of implementation of the peace agreement. It is thanks to this support that I was perceived by both parties, and especially by the Government, as the representative of the international community as a whole, with greater authority being enjoyed by my role.

The support was the result of a long and demanding work. Frequent meetings were held with the ambassadors who were members of the Supervisory and Control Commission and subsidiary commissions; with the African Group; with the members of the European Union; with the Group of Nordic Countries; and in general with anyone interested. Through these meetings, the entire diplomatic community in Maputo was kept constantly informed about the developments in the peace process, so that the Capital cities could receive timely, clear and unambiguous messages. No major initiative was undertaken without the prior consent of the international members of the Supervisory and Control Commission.

Particularly interesting was also the innovative procedure adopted whenever periodic reports were delivered by the Secretary General to the Security Council. The reports were drafted in Maputo and sent to New York. Contrary to normal procedures, which mandated strict confidentiality on this matter, I took the decision to discuss the draft of the reports with the representatives of the member Countries within the Security Council present in Mapu-





to, with a view to obtaining their prior consent. When the reports arrived at the Security Council, no observations were raised against their approval, and the ensuing Resolution reflected exactly what we needed. Such an amicable procedure shocked some of my colleagues in New York, but no one could deny its effectiveness. The Georgetown University wanted its students of the International Relations Program to study it and nicknamed it the 'Shadow Security Council'. The third factor concerned the great flexibility with which rules and procedures were adapted to reflect the situation on the ground rather than vice versa, with the latter being unfortunately the case often. At the time I was appointed, according to a well-established practice, New York was the decision-making centre for peacekeeping missions. The Special Representative of the Secretary General had to be a good official who dutifully performed as instructed. I took me little time to understand that such an approach did not make sense. Not even the most brilliant mind thou-

sands of kilometres away from the theatre of operations could make the right decision at the right time. Only a Special Representative on the ground could. However, this called for the ability to perform political analyses, take decisions quickly and accept risks, together with the willingness to change the rules and to accept all the related responsibilities. This is hardly consistent with the typical profile of a diligent and obedient servant, whose natural instinct is to use piles of written instructions as a sound liability insurance. A peace keeping mission is often a blanket too short and too narrow to cover a very tall person. Either you change the blanket or you make the person shorter. In Mozambique, I have decided to change the blanket, even though my decision has spurred complications from time to time. All in all, I am still deeply grateful to the Secretary General for letting me try such an approach, in fact for giving me *carte blanche*.

Aldo Ajello

1993-2013: THE 'FLIGHT OF THE ALBATROS', 20 YEARS LATER

Nostalgia and memories have marked the celebrations of one of the most memorable operations of the Italian Army during the annual convention of the National Alpini Association in Piacenza. The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Claudio Graziano, was also present.



Courage, faith, and passion; songs, shouldered ropes and climbing boots, together with waving tricolour flags: all this is cohesion, the overwhelming *esprit de corps* that spreads through the air and speaks to souls and hearts. The parade is an 11-hour uninterrupted flow of black feathers that represents, in fact, a whole life. Those who joined the Army in the Alpini Corps know that. Such devotion is so strong that never lets you down. The emotional impact of this year's convention in Piacenza has been the same as always. It is a traditional heartfelt appointment between citizens and mountain troops, both in service and retired, and the evidence of the strong feelings that bind places, the society, and the Armed Forces together. Honesty and Solidarity are the keywords chosen for the meeting. They represent the values embodied by the Alpini, which are kept alive in the national and international conscience thanks to the participation to several Peace Operations. Honesty and Solidarity are a self-evident truth that recall "the flight of the Albatros." Albatros was the Italian code-name for a mission carried out in Africa

together with other international forces to restore peace and order in Mozambique, in fact a conflict-torn land. And the "Albatros" is there, in Piacenza, twenty years later. There is still a strong desire to meet again the colleagues, comrades, friends with whom events that changed the lives of all black feathers have been shared. And there is a long, so long row of blue shirts and caps bearing the UN logo, and black feathers pointed to the sky. The colours of African sunsets and warmth were in the hearts of all. All started from a letter, in fact an invitation, by Corrado Perona, the President of the National Alpini Association, as agreed with the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Claudio Graziano. The organisation started immediately thereafter, and was supported by the warm hearts of the Alpini in the 'Taurinense' and 'Julia' Brigades. These are the men who took part in what in fact has been a great success of conscription at the international level. For no reason they would have missed such a significant event. Those young conscripts in the Alpini Corps of the time had been available to help the splendid

and dignified African people. Once the calling was issued, they all answered "I'm here!" That was indeed a special convention. Among the hundreds of thousands of black feathers who reached Piacenza, the UN light blue and white of peace have painted the streets of the city with colours. It was a perfect parade formation. For months they have met on the social networks. They built a network through e-mails. They also organized the trip to Piacenza, the stay, and the parade. Again, they promoted charity events for Mozambique, the same land that had stolen their soul twenty years earlier.

A sense of communion and joy pervaded all those who met after such a long time. Some are still part of the great Armed Forces family. Some others left the service after the conscription, or a few years later. But none of them has ever forgotten the values, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the abnegation and loyalty to the national colours and the Country.

Behind the banner that celebrates the mission twenty years later, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Claudio Graziano, was also on parade. He has been the Commanding Officer of the 'Susa' Battalion. He wanted to be there, greet the men who took part to the mission in Mozambique, and remember a mission that even today is a model mission for the Italian Army as a whole. He was holding in his hands a light blue commemorative t-shirt proudly donated by the men of 'Albatros'. Then came the salute and the repeated flashbacks onto the exciting adventure in Mozambique. Eventually, the two comrades who died during the mission were commemorated, together with the memories of all the men who might look different but were indeed unchanged in their hearts and souls.

Francesca Cannataro
Valentina Cosco

LIBRARY

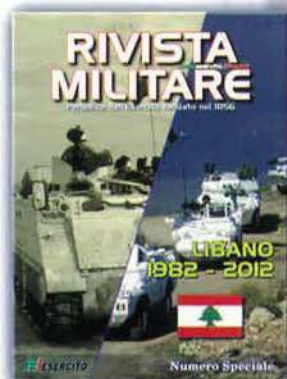
RIVISTA MILITARE

NEW ISSUES

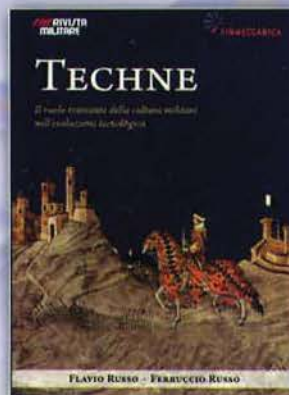
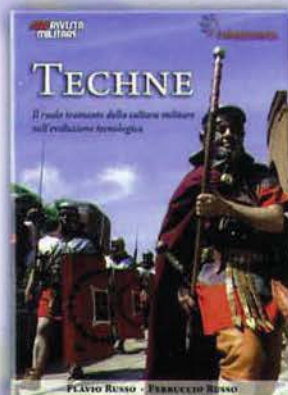
38	MOZAMBICO 1993 - 94	5,00
39	TECHNE «IL RUOLO TRAINANTE DELLA CULTURA MILITARE NELL'EVOLUZIONE TECNOLOGICA» (L'età moderna)	50,00

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE IN 2014

CODES	TITLE	PRICE
01	ABBONAMENTO ALLA RIVISTA MILITARE (ITALIA)	15,00
02	ABBONAMENTO ALLA RIVISTA MILITARE (ESTERO)	21,00
05	DIRITTI E DOVERI DEL CAPELLANO MILITARE	10,35
07	PAESI DELLA SPONDA SUD DEL MEDITERRANEO E LA POLITICA EUROPEA	10,35
08	SISTEMA DI SICUREZZA DEI PAESI DEL GOLFO. RIFLESSI PER L'OCCIDENTE	10,35
10	ORGANIZZAZIONE E BUROCRAZIA	15,30
11	QUINTO CENNI ARTISTA MILITARE	7,75
12	INDIPENDENZA ED IMPARZIALITÀ DELLA PUBBLICA AMMINISTRAZIONE	10,35
13	IL CLERO PALATINO TRA DIO E CESARE	15,50
15	GEOECONOMIA. NUOVA POLITICA ECONOMICA	15,50
16	LA LEVA MILITARE E LA SOCIETÀ CIVILE	15,50
17	LE OPERAZIONI DI SOSTEGNO DELLA PACE (1982-1997)	20,85
18	PAROLE E PENSIERI (RACCOLTA DI CURIOSITÀ LINGUISTICO-MILITARI)	41,30
19	UN UOMO «PAOLO CACCIA DOMINIONI» (RISTAMPA)	35,00
20	INDAGINE SULLE FORCHE CAUDINE. «IMMUTABILITÀ DEI PRINCIPI DELL'ARTE MILITARE»	58,00
21	HERAT ARTE E CULTURA. «L'ESERCITO ITALIANO IN AFGHANISTAN»	35,00



22	LE UNIFORMI DELL'ESERCITO ITALIANO SUI FRONTI DELLA GRANDE GUERRA. VENTIDUE STAMPE DA COLLEZIONE (TIRATURA LIMITATA A 10000 COPIE)	20,00
24	IN VOLO, MISSIONE DOPO MISSIONE	19,80
25	1980-2005 DALLA LEVA AL PROFESSIONISMO (L'evoluzione dell'E.I. in 25 anni d'immagini)	14,90
26	GARIBALDI. 1807-2007 DUECENTO ANNI DI STORIA PATRIA	25,00
27	GENERALE ANTOINE HENRY JOMINI (SOMMARIO DELL'ARTE DELLA GUERRA)	35,00
28	LE UNIFORMI DELL'EPOPEA GARIBALDINA 1843-1915 (TIRATURA LIMITATA A 10000 COPIE)	15,00
29	L'ACQUA «UNA RISORSA STRATEGICA UNA MINACCIA ALLA STABILITÀ»	40,00
30	DUE MILLENNI D'ARTIGLIERI D'ITALIA (TIRATURA LIMITATA A 10000 COPIE)	15,00
31	TECHNE «IL RUOLO TRAINANTE DELLA CULTURA MILITARE NELL'EVOLUZIONE TECNOLOGICA» (L'età classica)	50,00
32	LA DIMENSIONE INTERNAZIONALE DELL'ESERCITO ITALIANO	35,00
33	TECHNE «IL RUOLO TRAINANTE DELLA CULTURA MILITARE NELL'EVOLUZIONE TECNOLOGICA» (L'età medievale)	50,00
34	CARAITALI@ «DALLE MISSIONI ALL'ESTERO I NOSTRI SOLDATI RACCONTANO»	25,00
36	L'UNITÀ D'ITALIA. «RIVISTA MILITARE» RACCONTA	10,00
37	LIBANO 1982 - 2012	5,00



INFO: 06/47357373 - 06/47357372

for orders: CCP 1007604034, Difesa Servizi S.p.A. - Via Flaminia, 335 - 00196 Roma

